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From Special One to Nasty One

PLAYER BIOGRAPHY

JAMES RODRIGUEZ

Madrid's new Galactico

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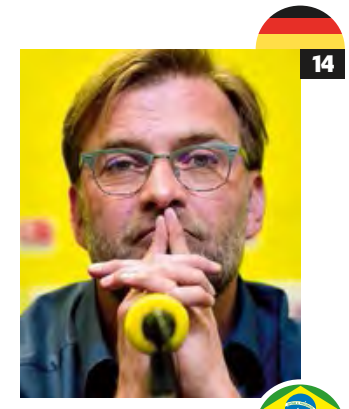

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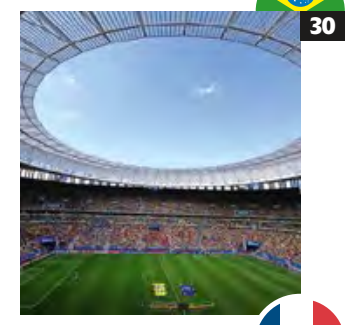

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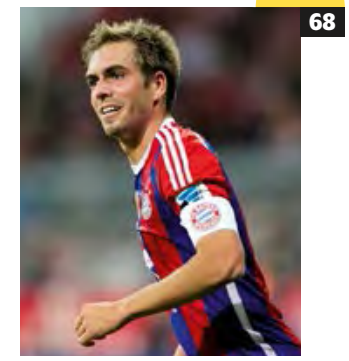

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In Pictures

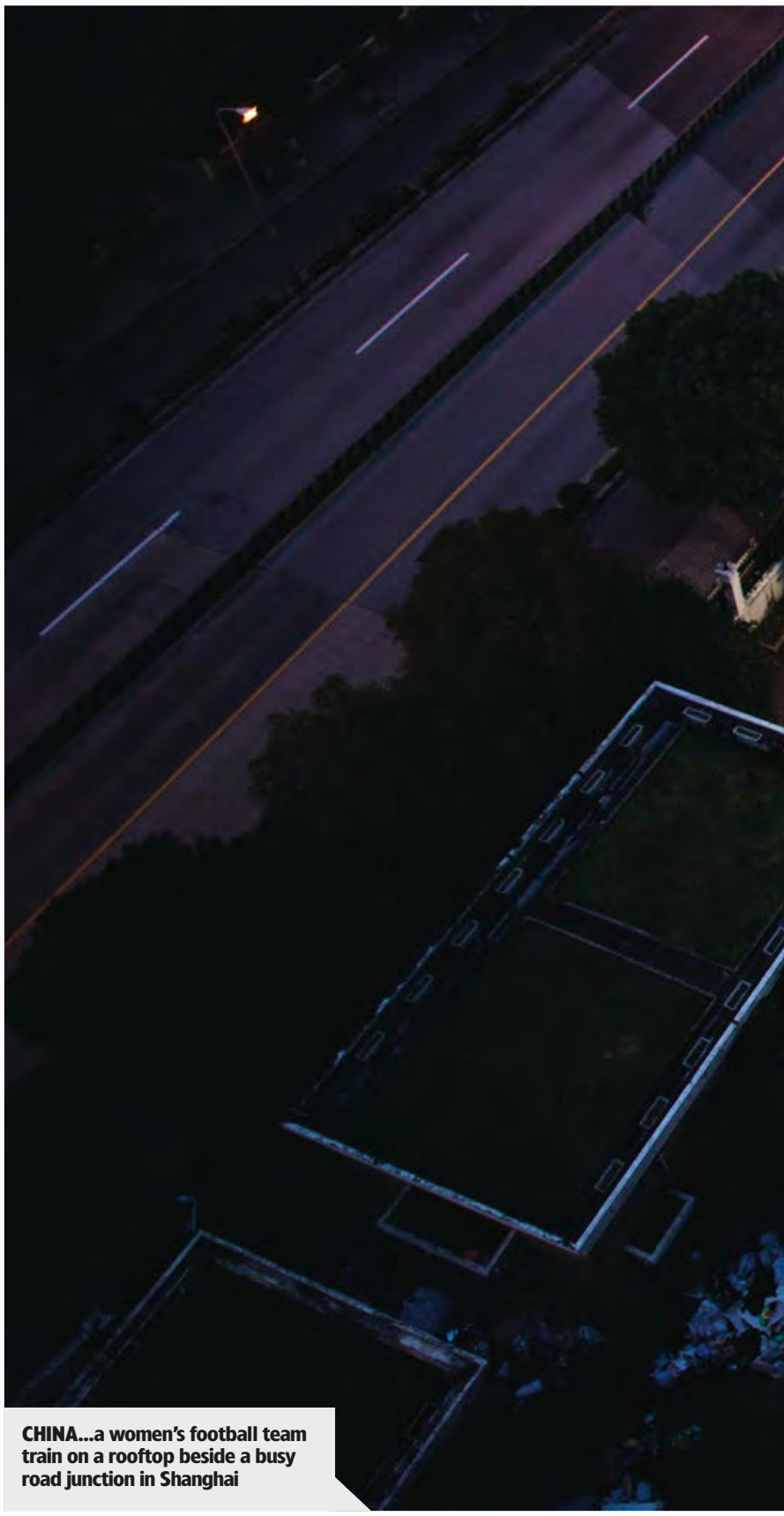
The global game caught on camera

PERU...Federico Santander of Paraguayan club Guarani scores despite Sporting Cristal's Josue Estrada attempting to stop him in the Libertadores Cup

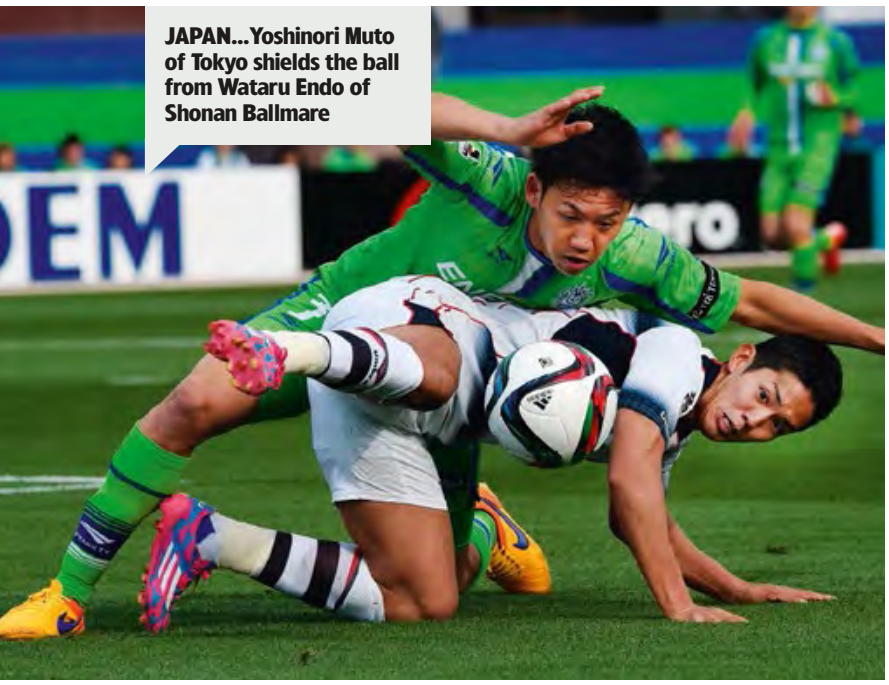
SLOVAKIA...home fans taunt their opponents from Luxembourg during a Euro 2016 qualifier in Zilina

BOLIVIA...fans of The Strongest wear plastic ponchos to watch their team against Emelec of Ecuador in the Libertadores Cup

CHILE...Esteban Paredes of Colo Colo reacts after he is penalised for a foul during a Libertadores game against Santa Fe



CHINA...a women's football team train on a rooftop beside a busy road junction in Shanghai



JAPAN...Yoshinori Muto of Tokyo shields the ball from Wataru Endo of Shonan Ballmare

SPAIN...Atletico Madrid's Mario Mandzukic sports a bloodied face after being caught by Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos during their Champions League quarter-final

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FROM THE EDITOR

Although we are approaching the business end of the season, when titles are decided and reputations established, thoughts are already turning to the summer transfer market.

There may well be some significant player moves – Radamel Falcao and Paul Pogba spring to mind – but the most interesting developments are likely to be on the coaching front. The decision by Jurgen Klopp to step down as Borussia Dortmund coach (page 14) may not in itself trigger a domino effect among the continent's elite managers. But it could be the first step in a series of major changes that take place this summer.

> Linked with Manchester City, other positions that become available could prove a better fit for Klopp

Inevitably, Klopp has been linked with Manchester City, where Manuel Pellegrini could depart after a disappointing season. But there will be other positions that become available that could prove a better fit for Klopp the strategist as well as Klopp the romantic. There could be openings in Paris, Madrid, Milan and Barcelona, to name just a few.

In fact, of the elite, only Chelsea's Jose Mourinho (profiled, page 60) seems safe, despite working for trigger-happy Roman Abramovich. The fun is only just beginning.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

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2 Hayatou extends CAF presidency ..... page 13
3 Wales, Iceland on course for Euro 2016 ..... page 88
4 Gabon awarded 2017 Nations Cup ..... page 90
5 Blatter on course for fifth term ..... page 18
6 Fenerbahce survive gun attack ..... page 80
7 Real Madrid sign Danilo ..... page 24
8 Queiroz quits Iran ..... page 24
9 Holland struggle in Euro qualifiers ..... page 84
10 Brazil championship kicks off ..... page 86

Choice...Fekir in action against Denmark, having picked France over Algeria

FRANCE

Fekir opts for *Les Bleus*

Lyon's highly rated striker Nabil Fekir made his senior debut for France in March, picking the land of his birth ahead of Algeria, the country of his parents.

The 21-year-old came on as a substitute for *Les Bleus* in a friendly against Brazil in Paris and then appeared again, against Denmark, four days later.

"Yes, I confirm, France are my choice", said Fekir. "I spoke with Didier Deschamps and he was very convincing. He said that he was counting on me and that I was an important player for him.

"This is a significant year as we are close to Euro 2016 [in France] and I really want to play in that tournament. I am French of Algerian origin and I feel it was in my interest to opt for France."

"We've had enough of losing face. Stop going to nightclubs and start acting like professionals"

Frustrated with Atalanta's poor showing in Serie A, fan Claudio Galimberti leads an on-pitch protest during a training session

GERMANY

Top scorer Meier out for season

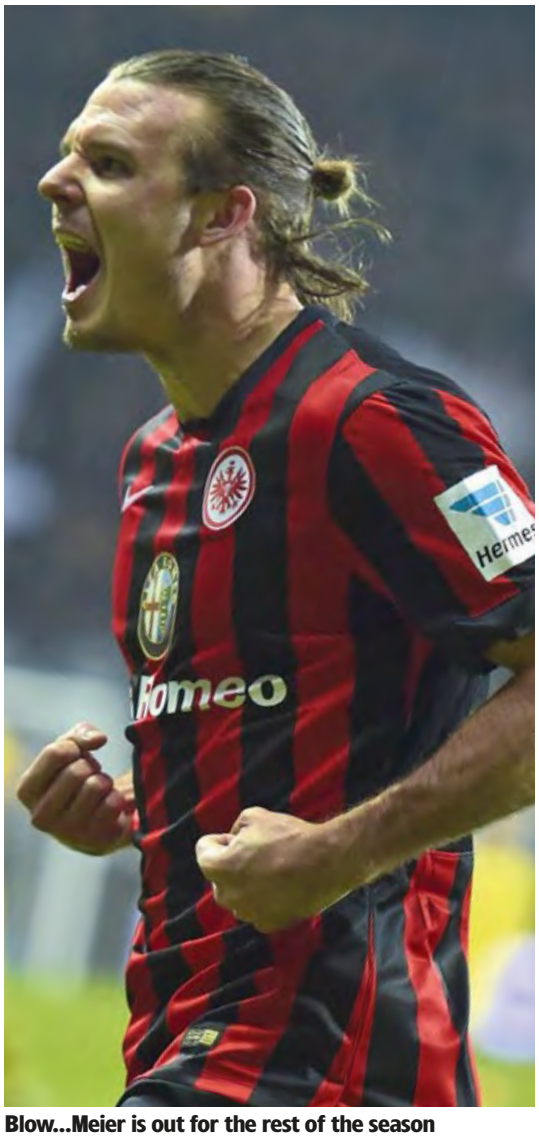
Eintracht Frankfurt's Alexander Meier, who is the Bundesliga's top scorer so far this season, will miss the rest of the campaign with a knee injury.

The 32-year-old striker had been enjoying the best season of his career, scoring 19 league goals before being sidelined by surgery.

Meier, who stands 6ft 4in, joined Eintracht in 2004 and has proved a hit with fans who see him as a throwback to the days of an old-style centre-forward.

"The injury to Alex has hit us hard," says Eintracht coach Thomas Schaaf. "We had hoped that he could help us with goals in the final games of the season.

"We wish him well with the surgery and just hope that he returns healthy as soon as possible."



Blow...Meier is out for the rest of the season

HEROES & VILLAINS

CRISTIANO RONALDO

Became only the third player – after Raul and Alfredo Di Stefano, with 323 and 308 respectively – to score 300 goals for Real Madrid. He reached that figure in just 288 games, compared to 741 and 392.

Legend...Ronaldo joins Raul and Di Stefano

SPARTAK MOSCOW

After a 102-year-old supporter was robbed in his home, the club raised more than €7,000 for him through player donations and a share of the ticket sales from the home game against Kuban Krasnodar.

KAZUYOSHI MIURA

The 48-year-old striker extended his existing record as the oldest scorer in J-League history, with a goal for second-tier Yokohama in their 3-2 loss to Jubilo Iwata.

LEE CASCIARO

The policeman scored Gibraltar's first-ever competitive goal at international level when he hit a 20th-minute equaliser against Scotland at Hampden Park.

Historic...Casciaro scored for Gibraltar at Hampden

MONTENEGRO FANS

Russia goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev was hit on the back of the head with a flare thrown by opposition supporters in a Euro qualifying game that was later abandoned due to crowd disturbances.

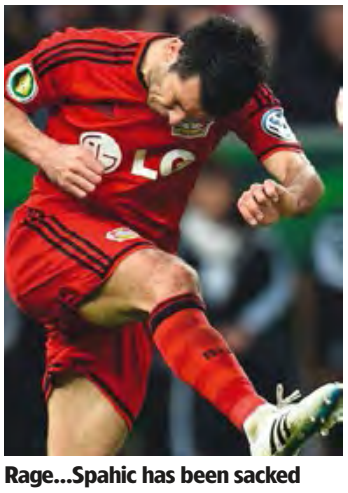
Violence...Akinfeev was struck by a flare

JUAN ARANGO

The Tijuana winger was banned for two matches by the Mexican Football Federation after he bit Monterrey midfielder Jesus Zavala on the left shoulder during a Liga MX game.

FABRICIO

The Internacional defender was sent off in a Brazilian state championship game against Ypiranga after making obscene gestures to his own side's supporters. The 28-year-old, who was later suspended by his club, stopped in the middle of a dribble, headed for the touchline and raised both of his middle fingers to the home fans who were booing him.



Rage...Spahic has been sacked

EMIR SPAHIC

The Bayer Leverkusen defender had his contract terminated for head-butting a steward after his side were knocked out of the German Cup by Bayern Munich.

"They are corrupt, three thieves who don't know the ethics of money"

World Cup-winning striker turned campaigning politician Romario (left) lights the blue touchpaper with his comments on FIFA general secretary Jerome Valcke and former CBF presidents Ricardo Teixeira and Jose Maria Marin

GOALS we'd like to see again

To see video footage of these goals, and many more that we have selected, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the videos by logging on to http://po.st/CpOxsL

1 ROBINHO
Palmeiras v Sao Paulo
An outrageous dipping lob from 45 yards in the third minute of a Sao Paulo state championship game.

2 FLAVIO CARNEIRO
Confianca v Socorrense
Rounds the goalkeeper, then backheels the ball over the covering defender into the top corner in a Brazilian state championship game.

3 TOSHIHIRO AOYAMA
Japan v Uzbekistan
A first-time volley into the top corner from 30 yards.

4 JERMAIN DEFOE
Sunderland v Newcastle United
Great technique to hit a superb left-foot volley into the top corner.

5 ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI
Bayern Munich v Eintracht Frankfurt
After flicking the ball over a defender's head, he turns and volleys powerfully beyond the goalkeeper.

6 GERMAN DENIS
Atalanta v Sassuolo
Luca Cigarini's backheel and a header by Maximiliano Moralez set him up to score with a bicycle kick.

WINNERS

PATRICK KLUIVERT
The ex-Holland striker won his first game as Curacao coach, beating Montserrat in a World Cup qualifier.

AUXERRE
The Ligue 2 side reached the French Cup Final thanks to a Frederic Sammaritano goal that knocked out holders Guingamp.

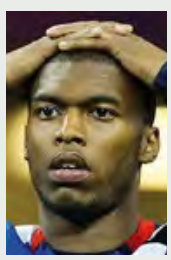
ARMINIA BIELEFELD
The third-tier side reached the semi-finals of the German Cup after seeing off Borussia Monchengladbach on penalties.

LOSERS

JACK HARPER
The Real Madrid midfielder was left out of Scotland's under-19 squad because manager Ricky Sbragia felt him a "luxury player we couldn't carry".

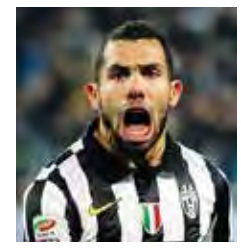
ISRAEL
Lost at home to group rivals Wales and Belgium in four days in the Euro 2016 qualifiers.

FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
Plans to enter GB men's and women's teams at the Rio Olympics were vetoed by the other home countries.



"My mentality is Argentine. My desires are in Buenos Aires"

Juventus attacker, Carlos Tevez tells Italian daily *La Repubblica* of his hopes for an another spell at Boca Juniors



Headliner

Issa Hayatou

African boss twists rules to stay in power

Issa Hayatou shuffles along at a slower pace these days, but there is no mistaking his upright gait and imposing presence as he towers over his contemporaries. At April's Confederation of African Football Congress, Sepp Blatter called him a man still "filled with physical vigour".

That was an exaggeration, given Hayatou now needs dialysis for a kidney complaint, but any suggestion the 68-year-old Cameroonian might be nearing the end of his long reign at the helm of African football is misguided after another massage of CAF's statutes ensures he can continue for as long as he likes.

Hayatou has never made Blatter's mistake of promising "just one more term". He has just kept chugging for 27 years, since becoming the surprise choice at a low-key Congress in Morocco. He has two more left in his current term and then, if his health holds up, more after that.

Over the last three decades, impediments to his tenure have been dispatched in a myriad of masterfully machiavellian moves, usually involving changing the rules to ruthlessly dispose of any potential opposition.

In his way this time was the age limit that disqualifies any office bearer from serving beyond 70. But with Hayatou's retirement ever closer, CAF suddenly felt the need to bring its statutes into line with FIFA, which has no age restrictions – to which Blatter bears testimony.

So, in an emphatic display of the complete control Hayatou has over CAF, all 54 member associations voted yes at the congress in Cairo to an amendment to the statutes, thereby scrapping the age limit. The whole matter was dealt with inside five minutes, leaving Hayatou free to seek an eighth term in 2017.

As if to emphasise his power, the congress also marked the departure of his two biggest rivals in recent times: Jacques Anouma of Ivory Coast and Algerian federation president Mohamed Raouraoua.

Anouma was handpicked by Blatter as a rival to Hayatou at a time when the FIFA and CAF heads were bitter rivals. Hayatou challenged Blatter's FIFA presidency in 2002, losing fairly convincingly, and in turn Blatter picked the Ivorian federation president as his man to take over CAF. Anouma had powerful connections, being the bag man for the country's president Laurent Gbagbo, reportedly making weekly trips to Paris with a briefcase of cash to stash for his boss.

With Blatter's backing, and to Hayatou's fury, Anouma won one of Africa's places on the FIFA executive committee in 2007 and was all set to challenge for the CAF leadership. But before the mandarins from Zurich could engineer the coup, Hayatou and Blatter were suddenly new bosom buddies in a dramatic switch of allegiances and Anouma was cast aside. He was persuaded to give up his CAF executive committee seat, but remained a FIFA ExCo member, with all the benefits that holds.

Hayatou pounced, proposing a rule that disqualified any person from running for the CAF presidency who was not a serving member of its executive committee, cutting potential rivals to a small, easily controllable handful. The African association presidents, compliant to a man, agreed without a word of dissent.

Then there was Raouraoua. He had emerged rapidly through the ranks, attaching himself to Hayatou like a magnet. But he made the mistake of articulating his ambitions too loudly and rubbed his colleagues up the wrong way with what one CAF executive committee member called "a know-all personality".

Both Anouma and Raouraoua's places on the FIFA ExCo were up for election in Cairo. The Algerian could see defeat coming from a long way off and withdrew in January to save his embarrassment. But Anouma doggedly kept up the fight, despite having lost Blatter's backing and becoming a non-entity in his own country, where his past master has been swept from power and is in jail in The Hague.

In a three-way race with newcomers Tarek Bouchamaoui of Tunisia and Constant Omari Selemani of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Anouma finished last and is now out of all football structures. The other two are Africa's newest members of FIFA's all-powerful cabinet.

Mark Gleeson

"Together we have built football in Africa"

Sepp Blatter on Hayatou

Backing...but Blatter (left) and Hayatou are former foes

"It would be wonderful to play in New York, London, Paris, Jakarta and Beijing"

Napoli owner Aurelio De Laurentiis wants the opening weekend of Serie A to be played in 10 foreign cities next season

Managers index

After his departure from Borussia Dortmund was announced, Jurgen Klopp tops our latest rankings of football's most in-demand coaches

1 Jurgen KLOPP

Shares in the club fell to their lowest level in 18 months, chief executive Hans-Joachim Watzke looked on the verge of tears and in the streets of the Ruhr city, fans wandered aimlessly, dismayed and disconsolate.

Whether it be the money men, the administrator or the faithful in the stands, April 15 2015 will go down in Borussia Dortmund history as the end of an era – the day coaching superhero and tactical visionary Jurgen Klopp announced his intention to leave at the end of the season.

The charismatic architect of Dortmund's renaissance following their brush with insolvency early in the new millennium, Klopp took them to the Bundesliga title in 2011, a domestic league and cup double the following year, and the runner-up spot in the 2013 Champions League. He still had three years left on his current contract, but feeling close to journey's end at the Westfalenstadion, ultimately thought it best to go now.

Age: 47
Nationality: German
Current status: Standing down at Borussia Dortmund.
Past: Guided Mainz into the Bundesliga for the first time before leaving for Dortmund, who he steered to successive Bundesliga titles in 2011 and 2012, and the 2013 Champions League Final.
Style: Charismatic, bespectacled motivator.
Future: Will get the pick of the top jobs on offer this summer.

"I've always said that if I no longer considered myself the perfect coach for this outstanding club, I would say so," explained Klopp at a press conference. "Over the last few weeks and days, I no longer could be absolutely sure about it. I couldn't answer the question with a yes or a no. I felt it my duty to inform the club.

"I really think the decision is the correct one. The club deserves to be coached by the absolute, 100 per cent right man.

"Why [make the decision] now ? In the last few years, we've been hurt by player decisions [Bayern Munich took Mario Gotze and Robert Lewandowski] which happened at a late stage and gave us no time to react. I didn't want to let this sort of pressure build up again.

"For the club to continue to grow and develop, a big head had to go and in this case it was mine. We wrote some great, great history. I've not completely left this [Dortmund] world. I've secured my three season tickets."

Success...winning the Bundesliga in 2012

Klopp denied he was suffering with burn-out and was in need of a sabbatical, but he has been under huge pressure of late. Dortmund's catastrophic form this season, marooned in the lower half of the Bundesliga for most of the campaign and a pale, unimaginative shadow of their usual turbo-charged, high-pressing selves, has left him open to virulent criticism for the first time and the strain has told.

In interviews, he often appeared tetchy and erratic, while during a 3-1 defeat at Borussia Monchengladbach he clashed with club captain Sebastian Kehl, a sign, perhaps, that all was not well in the camp.

Rarely has a coach so radically changed the structure, image and entire philosophy of a club. Brought in from Mainz in 2008, Klopp's energy, gung-ho style of play and ability to inspire helped turn the team into a European force. Whoever replaces him – fellow ex-Mainz man Thomas Tuchel is favourite – has enormous shoes to fill.

Klopp's all-conquering empire at Dortmund was not built on oligarch or corporate largesse. Happy to work his magic with fresh ideas, commitment, spiky ambition and young players, that he got the job done in the cosmos of Financial Fairplay that makes him extra special.

Dortmund never will be the same.

Nick Bidwell

In demand...Klopp will not be sure of offers this summer

"For the club to continue to grow and develop, a big head had to go and in this case it was mine"

"He could be a mini Sir Alex Ferguson. He dedicates himself to Benfica in an extraordinary way. He lives and breathes football 24 hours a day"

Ex-Benfica vice-president Jose Manuel Capristano on Jorge Jesus (right)

2 Diego SIMEONE

Age: 44
Nationality: Argentinian
Current status: Hugely successful with Atletico Madrid, winning the Spanish Liga and reaching the 2014 Champions League Final.
Past: Won league titles with Estudiantes and River Plate in Argentina, but less successful with San Lorenzo.
Style: Brilliant motivator and organiser.
Future: Recently extended his Atletico contract until 2020 but that may not deter wealthy suitors.

3 Frank DE BOER

Age: 44
Nationality: Dutch
Current status: Led Ajax to a fourth Eredivisie title – a record for a coach.
Past: Ajax youth coach, Holland assistant coach at the 2010 World Cup.
Style: Committed to youth and the Ajax/Barcelona system of possession-based attack.
Future: Has been linked with Tottenham Hotspur but may set his sights higher.

4 Jorge JESUS

Age: 60
Nationality: Portuguese
Current status: Benfica's longest-serving coach of the post-war era, he is on course for a second successive Portuguese league title.
Past: Won promotion with Setubal and Amadora, made progress with Belenenses and Braga.
Style: Attack-minded, clever tactician, supremely confident.

5 Luciano SPALLETTI

Age: 56
Nationality: Italian
Current status: Unemployed.
Past: Took Udinese and Roma into the Champions League. Won two Russian league titles with Zenit.
Style: Ambitious, attacking outlook.
Future: A club needing a fresh tactical impetus.

6 Thomas TUCHEL

Age: 41
Nationality: German
Current status: Unemployed.
Past: Coach of Mainz for five seasons, during which time the club consistently punched above its weight.
Style: Resourceful, clever tactician, strong motivator.
Future: The favourite to succeed Klopp at Dortmund.

7 Ralf RANGNICK

Age: 56
Nationality: German
Current status: Sporting director at Salzburg and sister club Leipzig.
Past: Worked wonders at Hoffenheim and took Schalke to the Champions League semi-finals in 2011.
Style: Likes his teams to adopt attacking, high-pressing tactics.
Future: A return to frontline coaching.

8 Paul CLEMENT

Age: 42
Nationality: British
Current status: Assistant coach of Real Madrid
Past: Assistant to Carlo Ancelotti at Chelsea and Paris Saint-Germain.
Style: Training-ground organiser.
Future: Has indicated his desire to return to England at some point, ideally as his own boss.

8 Rafa BENITEZ

Age: 56
Nationality: Spanish
Current status: Preparing to step down as coach of Napoli at the end of this season.
Past: European success with Valencia, Liverpool and Chelsea.
Style: Confident tactician, unafraid of change.
Future: Possible suitors in England and Spain.

8 Carlo ANCELOTTI

Age: 55
Nationality: Italian
Current status: Coach of Real Madrid but likely to leave even if the club wins major silverware.
Past: Multi-title success in Italy, England, France and Spain.
Style: Player-friendly, owner-tolerant.
Future: Will be in demand if and when he leaves Madrid.

Key Experienced · Successful · Volatile · Former player · Young · Long-term strategist · Tactician · Available

11 Ernesto Valverde *Athletic Bilbao*
12 Jocelyn Gourvennec *Guingamp*
13 Roberto Donadoni *Parma*
14 Vincenzo Montella *Fiorentina*
15 Julen Lopetegui *Porto*
16 Bert Van Marwijk *unattached*
17 Elie Baup *unattached*
18 Bernd Schuster *unattached*
19 Eddie Howe *Bournemouth*
20 Tony Popovic *W Sydney Wanderers*
21 Mario Been *unattached*

22 Rene Girard *Lille*
23 Mirko Slomka *unattached*
24 Lucien Favre *Borussia Mon'gladbach*
25 Lluis Carreras *Mallorca*
26 Markus Weinzierl *Augsburg*
27 Christophe Galtier *Saint-Etienne*
28 Philippe Montanier *Rennes*
29 Antoine Kombouare *Lens*
30 Sinisa Mihajlovic *Sampdoria*
31 Giuseppe Iachini *Palermo*
32 Ralph Hassenhuttl *Ingolstadt*
33 Erwin Van de Looi *Groningen*
34 Javi Gracia *Malaga*

35 Michel *unattached*
36 Alexander Zorniger *unattached*
37 Luis Zubeldia *LDU Quito*
38 Helder Cristovao *Benfica B*
39 Eric Gerets *Al Jazira*
40 Sascha Lewandowski *Bayer Leverkusen*
41 Cesare Prandelli *Galatasaray*
42 Alejandro Sabella *unattached*
43 Luigi Di Biagio *Italy U21*
44 Marco Landucci *assistant coach Juventus*
45 Martin Jol *unattached*
46 Frederic Antonetti *unattached*
47 Jose Luis Pinto *unattached*

48 Frank Kramer *Greuther Furth*
49 Gaizka *Garitano Eibar*
50 Zinedine Zidane *Real Madrid B*

More information on the Index at worldsoccer.com

"In the second division, teams do take the bus to many away games. The players will have to get used to it"

Nuremberg's director of sport, Martin Bader, criticises players who refused to travel by coach to Hamburg for a game against St Pauli, paying for flights themselves

Notebook

Highlights from some of our regular on-line contributions

SPAIN

The Spanish Cup Final will be played in Barcelona after the annual pantomime over the venue finally came to an end that didn't entirely satisfy anyone.

For the third time in six years, Athletic Bilbao and Barcelona meet in the Final, and they will do so in the third different stadium in a third different city.

Both clubs wanted to play at the Santiago Bernabeu – easily the biggest neutral stadium available and roughly as reachable for both sets of fans – but Real Madrid would not allow their stadium to be used to host their rivals. The clubs could not agree on an alternative, so it eventually went to a vote at the federation, with the Cartuja and the Benito Villamaron (both in Seville) and Valencia's Mestalla among the candidates. The two finalists put up their own grounds too: San Mames in Bilbao and Camp Nou in Barcelona.

It was Camp Nou that won in the end. Barcelona are at home, but as the older club Bilbao are the "home" team and will, in theory, occupy the home dressing room.

Sid Lowe

Host...Camp Nou will stage the Spanish Cup Final

Court ruling...Muller remains at Mainz

GERMANY

Expect plenty of fallout following the decision of a German court to side with veteran Mainz goalkeeper Heinz Muller in his battle with his club over his contractual status.

German common law states that after two years working for the same organisation, an employee has the right to have his contract transformed into a permanent one.

So, with the Bundesliga side refusing to offer the 36-year-old a new deal when his current contract expires at the end of this season, the custodian trotted down to the courts, where they duly did the necessary. Instead of offloading a player Mainz no longer need, Muller remains on board.

Nick Bidwell

BRAZIL

Even Brazil's nationalistic TV Globo was embarrassed by the foul count in the 1-0 win over Chile, with the *Selecao* committing 32 to Chile's 15.

Commentator Galvao Bueno made references to the theme, while Ronaldo referred to the practice of "tactical fouling".

It was an example of just how seriously Brazil take friendlies – especially when the coach is looking over his shoulder. Dunga was not a popular choice and the only way he'll keep his job is to keep winning.

Tim Vickery

Weekly notes from Brazil, Spain, Germany and Italy at **worldsoccer.com**

ITALY

While Roma's hard-earned win over Napoli kept them one point clear of their city cousins Lazio, all was not sweetness and light for Rudi Garcia's club.

The aftermath of the game was marked by a sustained polemic caused by a Roma fan banner that was critical of Antonella Leardi, the mother of Ciro Esposito, the Napoli fan killed – allegedly by a Roma ultra – prior to last May's Italian Cup Final between Napoli and Fiorentina at the Olympic Stadium in Rome.

Apparently referring to the fact that Esposito's mother was in Rome last week to promote her book, *Ciro Lives*, the Roma fans commented: "What a sad business. You are making money out of your son's death with books and interviews".

Paddy Agnew

Abuse...Roma fans claim a dead fan's mother is cashing in

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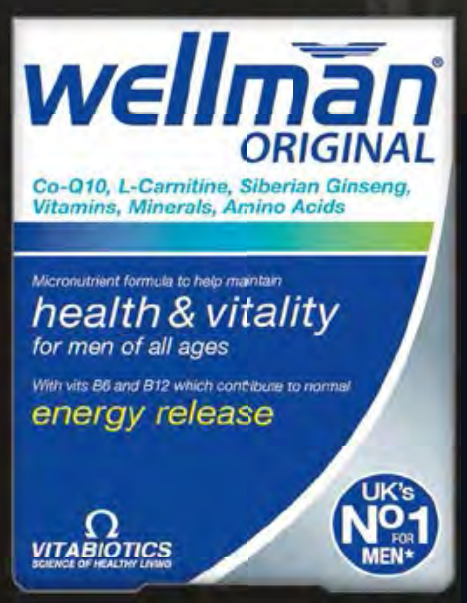

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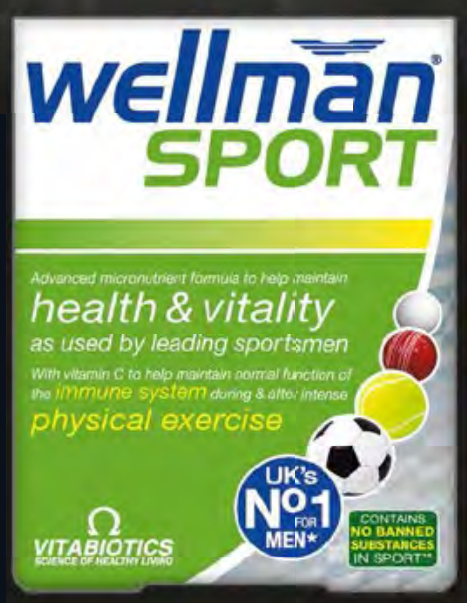

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Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

Fifth term awaits Blatter as challengers flounder

Thoughtful...Blatter knows that he could even be back as head of the world game in 2019

One safe bet – safer even than Sepp Blatter to be voted in again as FIFA president on May 29 – is that, while he might even conceivably be back in four years' time, none of his current rivals will.

They all acknowledge, privately, that their prospects of an FA Cup-style giant-killing are next to zero. But the strategy, as cooked up within UEFA, is not so much to overthrow the 79-year-old Swiss but to inflict cautionary damage.

Blatter, of course, could respond at a meeting of his new executive committee the day after Congress, by demanding that UEFA cede World Cup slots. But, on the basis that he has to work with Michel Platini and co for the next four years, he would probably consider that, though tempting, a political gambit too far.

In the meantime, FIFA's outgoing Asian vice-president Prince Ali of Jordan, Dutch federation leader Michael Van Praag and Portugal's former world player of the year Luis Figo have been trying to create as much noise as possible to remind all 209 national associations that May's event in Zurich is an election not a coronation; democracy not a dictatorship.

> "Effective change is simply impossible under the leadership of the same person who is responsible for the state FIFA is in"
>
> Dutch federation leader, Michael Van Praag

By the time election day itself comes around two of the three challengers may have stepped aside in favour of a single contender.

Prince Ali, the only one with non-European support among his nomination supporters, would seem the logical candidate. He counted the United States (CONCACAF) and naturally his own Jordan (Asia) among his backers and can hope to pick up other votes within central and North America as well as Asia – even though AFC president Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa is a declared Blatter devotee.

Van Praag is comparatively unknown outside Europe, while Figo, though presenting himself admirably, appears something of an apprentice undergoing work experience. One day, if the Portuguese federation is sensible and finds him something serious to do, Figo could amount to something. But this is not the time – and 2019 will not be the time either.

The one caveat is that Van Praag – knowing that defeat is inevitable – might decide to go all the way anyway and split the anti-Blatter vote with Prince Ali. In that confused vista, the prospect of Blatter winning with a first-round knockout cannot be ruled out.

Van Praag was clear winner of the rivals' "beauty contest" at UEFA Congress in Vienna. Blatter, accepting to speak only in his role as FIFA president, remained stony-faced above the fray as the other three set out their stalls.

Van Praag was decisively the most impressive in a way that Blatter never has or ever feels the need. Getting down to brass FIFA tacks, Van Praag wasted no time in pointing the finger.

"The beautiful heritage of international football has been tarnished by ever-continuing accusations of corruption, bribery, nepotism and wasting money," he raged. "FIFA has accomplished great things. But the current state of disarray asks for a change in leadership.

"It is the responsibility of our generation to clean up the mess.

"Effective change is simply impossible under the leadership of the same person who is responsible for the state FIFA is in."

Van Praag said he wanted only one four-year term "to start the normalisation process towards a more open, democratic and credible FIFA, to be handed over to the next generation in 2019. Since I do not have the ambition to be re-elected I can devote all my time to starting the normalisation process without having to worry about my chances of re-election after four years."

Fine so far, but then he stepped down into the bargain basement promises department by offering to quadruple the annual allowance to member associations to $1m along with

publishing the Garcia Report "as soon as legally possible", and details of the president's remuneration.

Van Praag said he had even flown to Zurich to offer Blatter a role as honorary president. The steam is probably still rising from Blatter's head at the audacity of it.

Figo has promised to hand lump sums back to the world's associations – "it's their money, not FIFA's" – and expand the World Cup finals to 40 or 48 teams, with the first-round groups split between two continents. He also wants to see FIFA devote more attention – and money, of course – to grass-roots football.

Prince Ali's manifesto took a much more philosophical approach, though this may have been lost on some federation bosses.

The Sandhurst graduate also went to war with a more subtle warning that the happy hand-out days are heading for the buffers as sponsors flee FIFA, while the world federation's image and perception remains at rock-bottom.

He said: "The damage which is being exacted upon 'Brand FIFA' has financial implications. Sponsors have begun to vote with their feet.

"If drastic action is not taken urgently to restore the image of our governing body, we can expect revenues to reduce and, in turn, monies available to national associations to also go down."

Apprentice...Figo

Hence his proposals for a more structured approach to development support and one which does not depend, as he noted, "on a FIFA president's approval". This jibe referred, clearly, to the multi-million "World Cup bonuses" which have been handed out annually to keep national associations and confederations happy ever since the 2010 finals in South Africa.

This strategy brings Blatter votes even in his rivals' heartland (think Spain and Russia for starters). When Platini sits on the podium, waiting for the count, will he wonder if he has missed his chance...or will he be the one still standing in 2019? **WS**

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Jim HOLDEN

AT THE HEART OF THE GAME

Europa League deserves more respect from the arrogant English

Contemptuous disdain for the Europa League within English football is loud and insistent – and, to my mind, completely baffling.

I keep hearing from myriad television and radio pundits that playing in a serious European competition – which is of far more worth than the domestic League Cup – is supposedly an unhelpful distraction at best and a "catastrophic burden" at worst.

The latest example, supposedly, is the current mediocre season of Everton. The argument was they couldn't cope with the extra demands of the Thursday/Sunday schedule of the Europa League and their Premier League campaign suffered as a consequence.

It is tosh, pure and simple. Everton's woes in the Premier League stemmed entirely from a defence that played poorly for so long, and subsequent loss of confidence in the dressing room amid rumoured fractures in the camp.

Participation in the Europa League as an explanation is a red herring. The Everton squad is strong and deep enough to cope with the extra matches involved. When you can spend £28million on a striker in Romelu Lukaku don't pretend that resources are stretched to breaking point.

I'm sure manager Roberto Martinez viewed the competition as an opportunity rather than a pain. Why wouldn't he when you look at the recent history of the Europa League and its positive impact for coaches?

Jose Mourinho began his rise and rise by winning it with Porto. Rafa Benitez did the same with Valencia, as did Diego Simeone when he took over at Atletico Madrid and found it was a springboard to consistent success.

The reward for reaching the Final with Middlesbrough (2006) and Fulham (2010) was a fairly swift jump to becoming the next England manager for Steve McClaren and Roy Hodgson respectively.

It is a question of mindset. In the last 11 years the Europa League has been captured six times by clubs from Spain, where the attitude towards it is positive. The one success for an English team came when Rafael Benitez, a Spaniard, was in temporary charge at Chelsea a couple of years ago.

His latest club, Napoli, progressed to the quarter-finals this year too. It is surely not a coincidence.

This season has been particularly dismal for English clubs on their travels, with none reaching the last eight of either the Champions League or the Europa League.

In the former competition there were various reasons for failure – from naivety at Arsenal and lack of quality at Liverpool, to cynicism at Chelsea and a slide in form at Manchester City. All of this generated an avalanche of debate and recrimination, as of course it should when the decline is collectively damning.

By contrast, early exits in the Europa League for Everton, Tottenham Hotspur and Liverpool, when they moved over from the other competition, were viewed as an irrelevance. Nobody much seemed to care – which is plainly absurd.

Why is this so? Is it a re-emergence of the old English arrogance about football abroad?

> Early exits in the Europa League are an irrelevance

Certainly, the Premier League is now so extravagantly wealthy – with even larger riches about to flow from a vast new TV deal – it is easy to see how skewed perceptions about the value of European competition could take hold.

It seems a more credible explanation than the idea that the Thursday/Sunday match day requirement for clubs somehow diminishes the Europa League. It doesn't elsewhere, and many major Premier League games are routinely played on Sundays for live television anyway.

The Europa League schedule hasn't been detrimental to Wolfsburg this season when they have been the closest challengers to Bayern Munich in the Bundesliga as well as quarter-finalists in the Europa League.

What English football needs is quite plain – to stop looking down its nose at a good competition. How can the glory of winning a European club trophy be seen as negligible – additionally when from this season on, the winners will qualify for the Champions League play-off round?

With a real change of heart it would be no surprise if English clubs took over from the Spanish as the dominant force every year. WS

Downed...Christian Atsu (in blue) takes a tumble as Everton exit the Europa League to Dynamo Kiev

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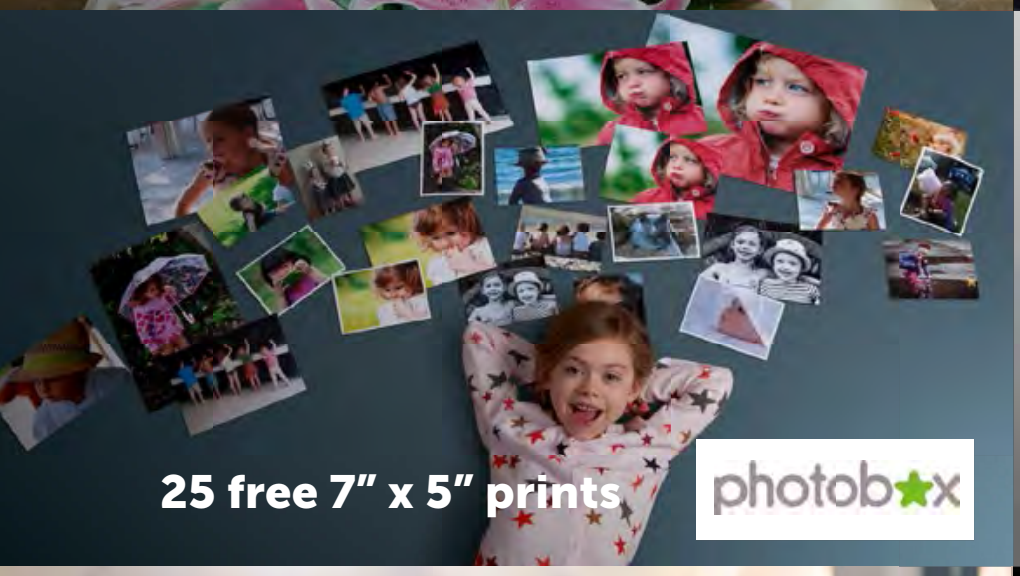

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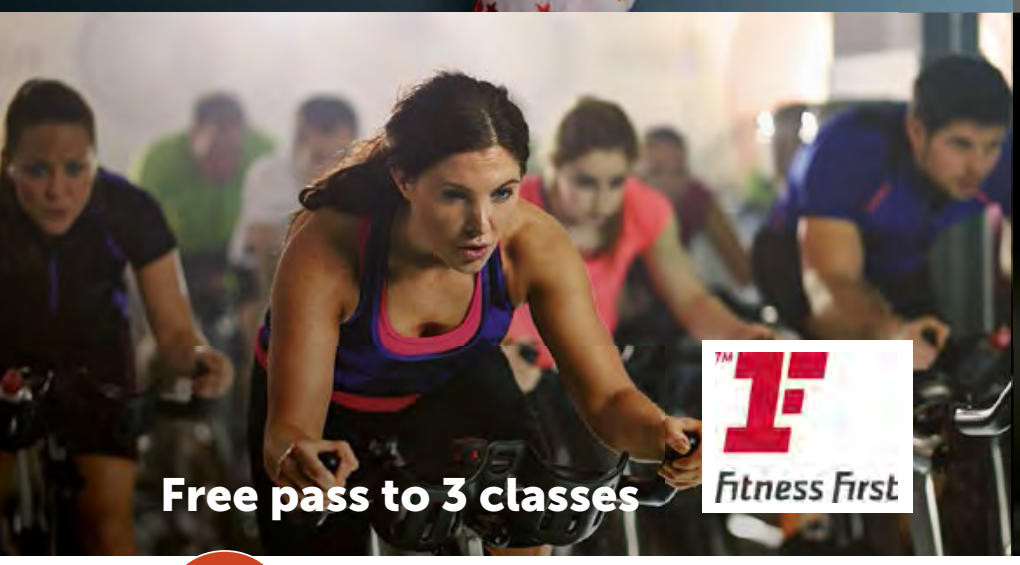

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Paul GARDNER

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

Qatar 2022 did not have to be a step into the unknown

Preparation...Spain and Uruguay played a friendly in Qatar two years ago

If I were to decide that I want to be a Formula One driver, they would first of all check that I have a driving licence; they would not let me start my learning process by awarding me pole position for the Monaco Grand Prix. So just how did Qatar get awarded the 2022 World Cup when it has no experience of organizing major – or even less than major – FIFA tournaments?

In 1995, Qatar hosted the Under-20 World Cup and even then it was pretty clear that FIFA knew about the heat problem. Scheduled to avoid high summer, the tournament was played from April 13 to 28.

FIFA was aware that it was impossible to play in a Middle Eastern summer before that, with the Under-20s in Saudi Arabia in 1989 staged even earlier, with games in February and March. When the Under-20s got a third middle-eastern venue, the UAE in 2003, the schedule ran from November 27 to December 19 – a timetable that, allowing for the shorter under-20 tournament, is very close to what FIFA is now planning for Qatar 2022, with its Final on December 18.

So well before the 2010 vote that gave Qatar the 2022 World Cup, FIFA had direct experience of the difficulties of playing football in the middle-eastern summer and each time it had got round the problem by scheduling the games early or late in the year.

> Qatar 2022 will be the first money-no-object World Cup

It is mighty strange that all that experience simply disappeared, with the 2010 vote appearing to have been taken without anyone being aware that a vote for Qatar was inevitably going to be a vote for a winter World Cup.

The fact that the hot weather problem of middle-eastern venues, already well-known to FIFA, was somehow ignored by everyone involved in the voting is a major mystery. Sepp Blatter subsequently admitted that the Qatar award was "a mistake", but that is not the right word to describe a decision that flew in the face of available evidence.

The Qatar imbroglio adds to my reasoning that there ought to be qualification tests before a country can be adjudged worthy of hosting a World Cup. I would suggest the staging of at least two of the lesser FIFA tournaments.

These would include the Under-20 World Cup, the Olympics, the Club World Cup and the Confederations Cup. I wouldn't include the Under-17 World Championship as it does not reflect many of the problems that might arise when using professional players and may well involve health and fitness problems that would not arise with older players.

The average attendance of 14,218 at Qatar's Under-20 World Cup was the norm for the tournament, while the football was by all accounts good, with Argentina beating Brazil 2-0 in the Final. But despite the apparent success of Qatar 1995, the business of having to shift the dates away from the summer was clearly a drawback that should have red-flagged the whole operation for Qatar 2022.

Until that difficulty was cleared up, Qatar should have been judged not suitable to host a World Cup – or even to bid for hosting rights.

Yes, taking the World Cup to the Middle East is important – but not if you trample all over common sense to prove a point. A qualifying system for hosting the World Cup would have only a short life as it won't be long before all the countries interested in hosting meet the preliminary requirements. In the meantime, such a system should ensure that a blunder on the scale of the Qatar award would be avoided.

But the blunder is done and, like it or not, we're going to get the first northern-winter World Cup – and I have the feeling that there will be plenty of free trips and elaborate gifts to seduce doubtful journalists; in short, it will be the very first money-no-object World Cup.

The blunder may have upset the rich European clubs, but FIFA has bought them off with greatly increased payments for use of their players in the World Cup.

But the blunder has also brought about an adventure, a step into the unknown – which can't be bad, especially when it also involves upsetting those rich Europeans who have come to believe that their interests are the only ones that matter in football. WS

"To begin with, it was a little difficult for me. I felt Pique was reticent"

French defender Jeremy Mathieu (left) reveals it took Barcelona centre-back partner Gerard Pique time to accept him following his move last summer from Valencia

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Appointments, sackings and loans

IN

EUROPE

VICTOR SANCHEZ, who played in the Deportivo La Coruna side that won La Liga in 2000 and reached the Champions League semi-finals in 2004, took over from Victor Fernandez as the club's coach. Almeria replaced Juan Ignacio Martinez with **SERGI BARJUAN** until the end of the season.

Real deal...Danilo moves to Madrid at the end of the season

Madrid sign Danilo from Porto

Real Madrid have signed Brazil right-back **DANILO** from Porto for €31.5million. The 23-year-old, who has agreed a six-year contract, will join the Spanish club at the end of the season.

Danilo, whose Porto contract expires in 2016, joined the Portuguese side in 2010 from Santos and has been a regular for Brazil since the 2014 World Cup.

New man...Van Bronckhorst

Assistant coach **OLIVIER GUEGAN** was put in charge of Reims for the last seven games of the season after the Ligue 1 strugglers sacked Jean-Luc Vasseur.

Defender **DIEGO LUGANO** has joined Swedish side Hacken until the end of the season in a bid to win a place in Uruguay's Copa America squad this summer.

BRUNO LABBADIA took charge of Bundesliga strugglers Hamburg for a second time, replacing temorary boss Peter Knabel.

Ajax's **NIKLAS MOISANDER** has signed a three-year deal with Sampdoria and will join the Serie A side at the end of the season.

GIOVANNI VAN BRONCKHORST will take over from Fred Rutten as Feyenoord coach at the end of the Eredivisie season. Former Holland striker **DIRK KUYT** has agreed to rejoin the club from Fenerbahce.

ZORAN MILINKOVIC joined Partizan Belgrade as coach after the Serbian league leaders sacked Marko Nikolic.

CSKA Sofia of Bulgaria appointed **GALIN IVANOV** as caretaker coach after Stoycho Mladenov resigned.

CONCACAF

Germany's **BERTI VOGTS**, who won the 1974 World Cup as a player and Euro 96 as coach, was appointed technical advisor to the USA national team.

Experience...Vogts is lending the US a hand

ASIA

A-League side Central Coast Mariners named interim boss **TONY WALMSLEY** as permanent coach.

BRANKO IVANKOVIC, who led Iran to the 2006 World Cup finals, replaced Hamid Derakshan in charge of Persepolis, who sat ninth in the 16-team Iranian league.

OUT

On his way...McLeish is leaving Genk

EUROPE

Utrecht coach **ROB ALFLEN** and his advisor **CO ADRIAANSE** will step down from their roles with the Dutch club at the end of the season.

Former Scotland manager **ALEX McLEISH** will leave his job as coach of Belgian side Genk at the end of the season.

BERNARD CHALLANDES stood down as coach of Armenia after a 2-1 defeat in Albania left the team bottom of their Euro qualifying group. Macedonia dismissed **BOSKO GJUROVSKI** after winning just one of their opening five qualifiers

SOUTH AMERICA

MURICY RAMALHO stepped down as coach of Brazilian side Sao Paulo due to illness. He was hospitalised in January with a digestive disease

Quit...Ramalho has left Sao Paulo

Disagreements...Queiroz

Queiroz quits Iran

CARLOS QUEIROZ stepped down as coach of Iran just six months after extending his contract until 2018. Queiroz guided Iran to the 2014 World Cup, but recently clashed with the federation over attempts to promote Sardar Azmoun and Alireza Jahanbakhsh from the under-23s to the senior national side.

MAURICIO PELLEGRINO was sacked as coach of Estudiantes after a 2-0 defeat at Tigre – the team's sixth game in a row without a win in the Argentinian championship.

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Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

New revelations shame Blatter and Qatar

A devastating investigation by *The Sunday Times'* Insight team has Sepp Blatter and FIFA bang to rights. Again, you might say. Except that this time the revelations are so shocking that you'd think action must be taken, above all to the extent of taking the 2022 World Cup away from Qatar.

The Qataris have now been shown to have done a scandalous deal with Blatter at the expense of the super-fixer Mohamed Bin Hammam, who Blatter evidently feared could successfully challenge him for the FIFA presidency that he now hopes to occupy for another four years.

Not that we should weep for Bin Hammam, who would probably, if this be conceivable, have made a still worse president of FIFA than Blatter. Meanwhile, Bin Hammam has been cast into outer darkness; not only by FIFA, having been found guilty of offering $40,000 bribes to officials of the Caribbean countries – using the deeply corrupt Jack Warner of Trinidad as the go-between – but by the Qatari regime itself, their Emir having done a deal with Blatter to force Bin Hammam out of the presidential contest in return for seeing they kept the 2022 World Cup.

> When Qatar won the World Cup vote, Blatter got a shock and his one thought was to destroy Bin Hammam

Thus, in May 2011, Bin Hammam withdrew from the presidential election. Two months later he was banned for life from football in consequence of the Caribbean bribery. In a sense he had been hoist with his own petard; Blatter running scared for his own position when it was made known to him that 14 of the 22 ExCo World Cup voting members had been bought by Bin Hammam, suggesting he might well buy the presidency of FIFA too.

Bitter rivals...Blatter feared Bin Hammam (right) could oust him as FIFA president

The Insight team received a call from a lobbyist close to Bin Hammam who told them, "Blatter didn't vote for Qatar [and their 2022 World Cup bid] because he did not want to give Bin Hammam any more power. Then, when they won, he got a shock, and from then on his one thought was to destroy Mohammed Bin Hammam. He provoked a death penalty by collecting those 14 votes."

In December 2012, Bin Hammam won an appeal against his suspension, only once more to be banned for life for supposed "irregularities at the Asian Football Confederation". He has now reportedly abandoned any connection with football, but Blatter, of course, is still there, the spider at the centre of the web.

On the moral face of it, he could hardly be re-elected when the voting for president of FIFA shortly takes place, but don't for a moment count on it. Like Joao Havelange before him, Blatter has profited from the ridiculous tradition that every member of FIFA, however big or small, has a single vote; which means that smaller countries become dependent on handouts from Blatter, who can therefore count on their support.

The Insight team are publishing a book about their laudable crusade entitled *The Ugly Game: The Qatari Plot To Buy The World Cup*, which I hope achieves the large sales it so fully deserves. Not that we can take anything like that for granted given the disturbing lack of response in the

English media the day after the latest Insight revelations.

As things stand, depressingly it looks as if even the big European countries have bowed the knee and are preparing for the 2022 tournament to be played in winter, thereby disrupting their own competitions cataclysmically.

Nothing, alas, to be expected from the inadequate president of UEFA, Michel Platini, who actually supported the initial Qatari bid when the tournament was due to be played in the appalling heat of that country's summer. And, in direct opposition to the interests of his own European members, he supported the tournament taking place in Europe's season. It has been reported, but never denied, that the ex-president of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, leaned on Platini to back Qatar to safeguard French commercial interests with the Gulf state.

As we know, hundreds of imported workers from Nepal and elsewhere have died working on the stadia being built for the 2022 World Cup, while generally having their passports confiscated so that they cannot escape even if they want to.

There is perhaps a parallel of a kind. Away back in 1974, in *The Sunday Times* itself, my American colleague Keith Botsford and I elicited a mighty scandal which came to be known as the "Lobo-Solti Case", the unsuccessful attempt of Juventus via Dezso Solti, a devious fixer, to

Tainted...the Derby County-Juventus semi-final

bend the return European Cup semi-final at Derby County.

Keith and I made it plain at the time that we would happily co-operate with any and every other newspaper, furnishing them with whatever information we could; with no response at all. The reason given that we'd covered the ground so effectively that there was nothing left for them to do.

Some of you may remember that Juve, already absolved by a ludicrous UEFA disciplinary committee, escaped scot-free in the image of the serpentine Italo Allodi, who, as we subsequently pointed out, had been the mastermind of Internazionale's far more effective chicanery in the 1960s.

So will Blatter get away with it, as Havelange did, for 24 corrupt years, his only belated and irrelevant punishment coming well into his 90s over the ISL bribery scandal when he was deprived not of his ill-gained riches but of his honorary presidential title? In an ideal world, after such new revelations, the major countries, Europe's especially, would pull out of FIFA en masse. Don't bet on it. **WS**

Flop...Walcott's inclusion against Italy did not work

Roy must try harder

My friend Roy Hodgson has said he feels his contract as England's manager should be extended until the next World Cup. With the greatest respect for an excellent coach, I think it would be premature – at least until we see how England fare in the ensuing European Championship finals.

To be perfectly frank, I thought Roy made palpable mistakes in England's recent game against a far from full-strength Italy in Turin, errors which had not been sorted out till after half-time.

To choose Manchester United's Phil Jones in that indeterminate role in front of the defence could have been potentially fatal. Hard to forget that deeply embarrassing moment when the hulking Giorgio Chiellini, who had already committed the cynically early foul on Harry Kane, breezed past Jones from the left as though he were a Neymar or a Messi, to set up the Italian goal.

And what was the sense of deploying Theo Walcott, only just back in action after long weeks out with injury, not even on the right wing but as a presumed striker who did anything but strike? Not until half-time was Walcott taken off and Wayne Rooney pushed productively into attack from behind the strikers, while Jones was pulled back into his more habitual role in central defence.

Yes, I know Walcott – that one marvellous game in Zagreb not forgotten – fancies himself as a centre-forward. His dream may well come true but hardly when he has been out of the game so long.

Could Tim have lifted mediocre Tottenham?

Are Tottenham Hotspur now regretting that they didn't keep Tim Sherwood on after his five weeks as manager last season?

I was at White Hart Lane to see his Aston Villa team – looking doomed until he took over – have far the better of a match in which Spurs were hardly at the races, even if the margin was only 1-0. It was hardly Mauricio Pochettino's fault that so much of the £100million received from Real Madrid for Gareth Bale was spent on players who have been so disappointing.

According to Sherwood, even the new Spurs hero Harry Kane would have been sent on his travels yet again had not Sherwood – who spent five years as head of the club's successful youth scheme – insisted on him staying.

Against Villa, where Christian Benteke was the star turn, Kane was miserably lacking in the support he needed and deserved. Too often of late, not least twice against Leicester City, have Spurs been mediocre at the most.

Revenge... Sherwood celebrates Aston Villa's victory over the club that let him go

Read Brian Glanville's exclusive online column at worldsoccer.com

Kit is not Fulham's saviour

Waste...Ruiz (no10) has been under-used

It looks as if Fulham will just about save themselves from dropping out of the Championship, but it is increasingly hard to see Kit Symons as a convincing manager.

Symons began well enough after the iron and idiosyncratic reign of Felix Magath was blessedly over, but he continues to make bewilderingly sparse use of undoubtedly the best Fulham attacker in Costa Rica's Bryan Ruiz – almost lent to Levante, and then time and again brought on ludicrously late despite almost always galvanising the attack.

Symons also seems inexplicably averse to using wingers though he has several good ones in his squad.

As for Fulham's dismally shaking defence, Symons has hardly been blessed with resilient players. Alan Curbishley is now at Craven Cottage in a senior managerial position but, as yet, his influence is not apparent.

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Tim Vickery reports from Rio de Janeiro

BRAZIL

Grounds for concern

The domestic game remains in decline

A few years ago, when the global financial crisis struck but Brazil kept on booming, a new possibility appeared to open up. In an increasingly multi-polar world, it became conceivable that the Brazilian league might pose a challenge to the dominance of the major European competitions.

It is now abundantly clear that this has not taken place. Indeed, the gap between Brazilian and European club football has probably never been wider. Worse still, some of the outstanding names of last year's Brazilian championship will not be on show when the 2015 version kicks off on May 9 because they have been lured elsewhere. And instead of Europe, as used to be the case, these players have gone to China, the Middle East and the USA.

For Brazil, the worry is if the Americas can mount a challenge to Europe, it is more likely to come from MLS than Brazil. For the time being, though, Europe's dominance will not be threatened.

The big European clubs have uncoupled themselves from local economic crises by capitalising on their international profile, finding ways to turn global popularity into revenue. Of every 10 club shirts sold in Brazil, four are of European teams.

Brazil, meanwhile, has been staring intently at its belly button, still devoting the first four months of the year to the antiquated state championships, whose continued existence can only be ascribed to parochial political motives. Brazil's footballing calendar is drawn up as if the rest of the world does not exist – hence no pauses for FIFA dates and, this year, the alarming news that players called up for the Copa America will miss up to a quarter of the league programme.

Moreover, Brazil's economic boom has well and truly run out of steam and recession is already having an effect on club finances. Historically complacent with the huge tax debts the clubs have built up, the Brazilian state is now looking for a solution. So, after years of over-spending, there is something of a cut-price feel to this year's championship.

These multiple problems give rise to some obvious questions; was hosting ▸

Hard times...last year the Mane Garrincha stadium in Brasilia hosted the World Cup game between France and Nigeria (left); now it is little used and its car park (above) acts as a city bus depot

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Outpost...based in Recife, Sport are the only northern team in this season's Brazilian top flight

the 2014 World Cup, with the huge amounts of public money spent on stadiums, not supposed to put the Brazilian game on a much better, more modern footing? Almost a year after the circus left town, why would Brazil be still badly in need of a great leap forward?

Part of the answer lies rotting in Brasilia, the nation's capital. The Mane Garrincha stadium was the most expensive of the 12 World Cup venues and much praised by the international media. But, just two years old, it is in a poor state because the local clubs are just too small to afford to use it.

The stadium has barely staged a game for months, its car park has been used as a bus depot and some of its offices now house government departments. When it has been used to stage games, it's because big clubs from elsewhere have moved their games to Brasilia – a practice not only infringing the integrity of the league competition, but also making it harder for local teams to construct their own fan base, which is the only long-term solution for the viability of the stadium.

The money spent on staging the World Cup comes across, in this case at least, as an investment made with no real planning or thought for the future.

The justification for having 12 World Cup venues – FIFA would have been happy with eight – was that this would have a decentralising effect on Brazilian football culture. This, of course, is a process that is not going to happen overnight. It would be way too much to expect Manaus and Cuiaba, the most remote of the 2014 stadiums, to immediately have strong, well-supported teams. For all the controversy about the building of these stadiums, this is a legacy that can only be evaluated in the long term. Nevertheless, it is worrying that only half the World Cup stadiums play host to first division teams.

The traditional main centres of the Brazilian game, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, are in the south east, as is Belo Horizonte, one of the two principal sub-centres. The other, Porto Alegre, is in the south. This year, remarkably, Santa Catarina, another southern state, will have four teams in the top flight and, between them, the south east and the south provide 18 of the 20 top-flight teams.

In the north, the main teams from the big cities of Fortaleza, Salvador and Recife have big support, but the region is relatively poor, and the clubs struggle to make a national impression. The economic growth of the last few years has yet to make a real impact on north-east football, despite it staging half of the 2013 Confederations Cup and a third of the World Cup.

It might have been realistically expected that this would quickly filter through into a more competitive north eastern football. But with the relegation of Salvador's Bahia and Vitoria, Sport of Recife are the region's sole representative in the top flight. Even here, though, there are problems. Sport have staged some games in the new Arena Pernambuco, but it is in the middle of nowhere, with precarious transport links, making their old city-centre ground more attractive for most supporters.

In the heartlands the new stadiums are in constant use. But here too there is evidence of poor planning. The Maracana in Rio and the Mineirao in Belo Horizonte are being run by private consortia. The quest to make them profitable has entailed high ticket prices, pricing many out of the stadium and also raising a clear moral question: should society really be expected to pay for these stadiums twice over, first

> "Our football went into decline when we stopped giving value to the pass"
>
> **Tostao, a World Cup winner in 1970**

Bright note...Gremio's stadium is rated the best in Brazil

Enterprise...the Maracana, hosting a match between Fluminense and Corinthians, is run by a private consortium

through taxes then stiff admission charges?

The clear conclusion is that the whole 2014 sporting legacy process was not thought out. Issues of calendar and pricing were not adequately addressed. The logic of "if you build it, they will come", belongs to a field of pipe dreams.

There is, though, huge potential. The World Cup stadiums are not the only new grounds. Gremio have one, and by consensus the best of the lot, so now do Palmeiras. Average crowds did rise through the second half of last year, finishing around 16,500 – so with better organisation, a figure of 25,000 should be reachable within the foreseeable future.

Obstacles to achieving this include deficiencies in transport infrastructure, a problem of violence that scares many away and a lack of quality football. For it is not only in terms of organisation that the Brazilian game has been standing still.

"European football," says young Santos striker Geuvanio, "has more passing of the ball. Brazilian football is more long balls and hard running." It is a declaration that may strike anyone over 45 as insanity. But

Outpost...it will take time for the Arena do Amazonia in remote Manaus to be home to a strong local fan base

Geuvanio is only relating the culture in which he has grown up. Teams are often all spaced out, and the lack of options make the big kick forward the easy choice.

"Our football," argues the great Tostao, "went into decline when we stopped giving value to the pass." The most important developments of the game in recent years seem to have passed Brazil by – there was a hint of the 7-1 World Cup semi-final in the Final of the 2011 Club World Cup, when, to general astonishment in Brazil, Santos were brushed aside 4-0 by a Barcelona team that did not have to break sweat. "My team treat the ball in the way my grandfathers tell me Brazil used to do," said then-Barca coach Pep Guardiola.

Christian Rapp, the Brazil director of Rogon, a German group who look for promising young players, says: "Our work has become more complicated in the last five or six years because the game in Brazil has stagnated." They now consider it vital a player completes his formation in Europe.

The stakes are high, then, as the 2015 championship prepares to kick off. The healthiest recent development sees debate taking place on need for change – among players, in the press, by academics and even a new breed of directors. For without organisational improvement off the field and a tactical rethink on it a once-great league will surely fall further behind. **WS**

● *For a team-by-team preview of this year's championship, see pages 86-87.*

Steve Menary reports from Castries

SAINT LUCIA

Slow progress in the heart of the Caribbean

Changes planned for domestic game

What Lyndon Cooper describes as "parallel tournaments" are common all across the Caribbean. In a region where amateur football is still the norm, privately run competitions offering prize money are big attractions for fans and players in countries from Barbados to Guyana. But not, if Cooper has his way, in Saint Lucia.

"We are selling one brand and that is association football," says the Saint Lucia Football Association (SLFA) president.

"I am stopping this because it's against international rules. You wouldn't want a World Cup run by Adidas or Nike."

In order to facilitate the changes, the SLFA are introducing a player-registration system which, while it might seem obvious in larger countries, has rarely been needed on an island of 182,000 people. In fact, the previous registration system was so vague that when Saint Lucian teenager Zaine Pierre signed for W Connection in Trinidad & Tobago in 2010, his subsequent transfer to Serie A side Genoa prompted a FIFA probe into compensation.

Administrative problems like this make Saint Lucian football seem archaic.

There are 19 district associations on the island and these provide representative teams which compete in inter-district competitions. There was also a three-tier league for club sides, and players were allowed to move freely between clubs and districts, as well as playing in the "parallel tournaments".

In the past, dual registration was common, but the SLFA now insists that every Saint Lucian player must sign for one district and one club by April 30. After that, unregistered players will not be allowed to play. In addition, any player seeking to move will need a formal transfer.

Cooper is adamant that registered players will not play in tournaments that ➤

Beauty spot... Saint Lucia

Ideas...FA president Lyndon Cooper

Tussle...Saint Lucia midfielder Tremain Paul (in blue) in World Cup qualifying action against Canada

First impressions... the door to the SLFA's headquarters

are not affiliated to the SLFA.

But Cooper's reforms have provoked outrage among many of the club sides as inter-district competitions – initially at under-15 and under-23 level – are prioritised since the most important league for the clubs, the Gold Division, ceased to exist in 2013.

Cooper insists the league's demise was due to a lack of sponsorship and says that the SLFA's outgoings exceed the income from FIFA's financial assistance programme, which totalled $500,000 in 2014. The financial situation means that the national team has no sponsor and the SLFA has to source kit from Pakistan to get the best deal.

"It's not a popularity contest," says Cooper. "We decreased the amount of competition as there is no sponsorship and no funds. We did that to increase the playing time for younger players."

Viewed from afar, the situation appears healthy. The senior national side won the 2014 Windward Islands Tournament and this year the juniors competed in the final round of qualifiers for the Under-17 World Cup, which is the best achievement by any Saint Lucian national team.

Cooper's plan is to, ultimately, have each

Child's play...La Clery field in Castries

> "It's not a popularity contest. We decreased the amount of competition...to increase the playing time for younger players"
>
> **SLFA president Lyndon Cooper**

of the 19 districts run a senior regional competition. Once these senior district club competitions are completed, the top two sides in each district will then play in a seemingly unwieldy 38-team final round. Smaller regions with few clubs will get equal representation to the capital, Castries, where a quarter of the population live and half of the eight clubs in the last Gold Division season were based.

Many Saint Lucians remain mystified by Cooper's proposals and in June's presidential election he is expected to face at least three challengers – including Aka Shakes, who is the local agent for Kashif & Shanghai, the one remaining local parallel tournament, which offering around 20,000 East Caribbean Dollars ($7,400) to the winners. However, the clubs cannot even attend the SLFA annual congress, let alone vote, so with Cooper claiming to have 18 of the 19 district presidents' vote in the bag, his plans for the future look likely to be given the green light.

According to Greg Mathurin, who runs the youth academy at VSADC – one of Saint Lucia's most successful senior clubs – all Cooper's good intentions are just an illusion. "A vote for Cooper is a vote for the end of club football," he sighs.

Trevor Daniel, like Mathurin a former international and now coach at club side Lancers, is also despondent. Disenchanted by the stasis gripping the club game, he has set up his own academy.

More than 200 children attend regular sessions at La Clery field in Castries and he sends half a dozen buses to schools to collect the kids, most of whom pay nothing. "But what happens to these kids when they get older?" asks Daniel. "Where will they play? If they don't get through to the district finals, where else can they play but parallel leagues?"

Junior success...the national under-17 side

With no club action, players have to look for different outlets.

At the Windjammer holiday resort, the uniform for the beach staff is a football kit. Windjammer has a 28-player squad and won the 2014 Gros Islet district competition, but this is a works team and has none of the youth development beloved of SLFA technical director Ces Podd, who played professionally with English side Bradford City for 14 years.

In the same month as the presidential election, Saint Lucia begin their 2018 World Cup qualifying campaign against an Antigua & Barbuda side that reached the CONCACAF semi-finals round four years ago. Antigua & Barbuda achieved this after recruiting a number of overseas-based professionals with Antiguan parents or grandparents. But that is not an option for Saint Lucia as government regulations

make naturalising eligible players, such as Anton Ferdinand of Reading, difficult.

The SLFA was formed in 1979, after Saint Lucia gained independence from Britain, and FIFA membership was secured nine years later. A team first entered the World Cup qualifiers in 1994, but as the island's national coach in the early days, Stuart Charles-Fevrier, says: "Football is still viewed as a pastime in Saint Lucia, but once you are affiliated to FIFA, football must be viewed more seriously."

Of those Saint Lucians playing abroad, Pierre – who has been loaned out by Genoa to Italian third-tier side Aversa Normanna – is the only member of the current national squad with experience outside the Caribbean. Kurt Frederick, Jamil Joseph and Eden Charles play in Trinidad & Tobago, while Pernal Williams is with Aiglon du Lamentin in the French territory of Martinique.

Joseph and Charles both spent a brief period with Carlisle United in 2013 after the English club's manager, Greg Abbott, who had played with Podd, visited the island to help Saint Lucia prepare for the 2014 World Cup qualifiers.

Ex-international... Trevor Daniel

Temporary hospital... the George Odlum Stadium

Hopeful...Saint Lucian-born Janoi Donacien of Aston Villa would prefer to represent England

"They were not quite good enough, but one day a player from Saint Lucia will be," says Abbott.

London-born Warren Hackett played for the land of his mother and brought two Saint Lucians to the UK when he was at Mansfield Town in the 1990s. But like Abbott later on, Hackett was stymied by work permit problems.

In England, permits are only offered to players from countries within FIFA's top-70 ranking. Saint Lucia's ranking has improved but remains well short of that level.

Hackett returned a few years ago and found what he describes as amateurish leagues and poor facilities, which have worsened since then, although through no fault of the SLFA.

In 2009, a fire devastated the island's hospital, St Jude. The George Odlum Stadium at Vieux Fort was taken over by the government as a temporary hospital and has been unavailable ever since. The terraces are strewn with junk and the pitch overgrown, suffocated by weeds. The ground is now unusable for football.

The hospital is currently being rebuilt, albeit slowly, and since the fire the national team have played at the Beausejour Stadium, which is a cricket ground in Gros Islet.

Club pitches are scarce on the mountainous island. The La Clery field is poor, and a visit to the SLFA's run-down offices in Barnard Hill does not suggest that the game is on the rise either. But this could have been very different.

In 2003, FIFA granted the SLFA $400,000 under its GOAL development programme towards a $491,000 project at La Clery. After a change in Saint Lucia's government, the island's politicians decided that people needed food not footballs.

Though work had started on the project, the SLFA were told – in a phrase now embedded in the minds of Saint Lucia's football community – to "unscramble the eggs."

Work halted and the site is a shrimp farm these days.

Quite how many of those shrimps are eaten not by Saint Lucians but the thousands of tourists that flock to the island every year is unclear. **WS**

THE KEY FIGURES

● LYNDON COOPER

Cooper was elected SLFA president in 2011 but, by his own admission, his footballing experience is limited to school. He has proved a controversial president and faces re-election this June. He is also vice-president of the Caribbean Football Union.

● FRANCIS LASTIC

Saint Lucia's national coach spent most of his playing career as a defender with Vieux Fort-based Roots Alley Ballers and Northern United All Stars. Retired in 2011 and guided the national team to the runners-up spot in the revived Windward Islands Tournament in 2013 and claimed the title last year.

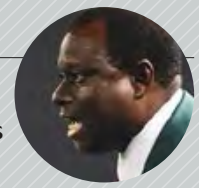
● CES PODD

From St Kitts & Nevis, he made more than 500 Football League appearances for Bradford City between 1970 and 1984. A friendship with Keith Alexander, who had Saint Lucian parents, led the pair to develop a youth-development plan for the island. The Macclesfield Town manager died suddenly in 2010, but Podd took their ideas to the SLFA and was recruited as technical director the same year.

● KURT FREDERICK

The defender is one of the few Saint Lucians playing professionally overseas. In 2010 he signed for W Connection in Trinidad & Tobago, where he is a first-team regular and has won many medals.

● STUART CHARLES-FEVRIER



The island's most successful football export, he gained his coach's licence in England in 1990 and led Saint Lucia to third place in the 1991 Caribbean Cup, which remains their best performance in that competition. He joined W Connection in Trinidad in 1999 and has won more than 30 titles with the club, including a 2013-14 hat-trick of Toyota Classic, FA Trophy and Pro League.

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Lovell soccer

The new Galactico

WORDS: Carl Worswick

The Colombian lit up last summer's World Cup and is now a stella addition to Madrid's galacticos

They lined the streets, swung from the trees, and for several hours covered virtually every blade of grass in Bogota's main park. Despite claims from the football federation of wanting to organise just a "simple celebration", more than 100,000 Colombians choked the capital to welcome home the country's World Cup heroes on July 6, 2014. Colombia had never seen anything like it before.

After an open-top bus parade from the airport, the squad took to the stage under a hail of frenzied screaming that sucked even reclusive coach Jose Pekerman from the shadows to perform the famous "Ras Tas Tas" dance while wearing a pair of comic tri-colour sunglasses.

But while there was little doubt that Pekerman deserved credit for Colombia's ▸

Timeline

MAR 25, 2007
Scores in Colombia's 5-0 win against Venezuela to secure second place in the South American Under-17 Championship.

FEB 27, 2009
Comes on as a 64th-minute sub and scores nine minutes later on his debut for Banfield, in a game against Rosario Central.

DEC 13, 2009
Despite a 2-0 loss at Boca Juniors on the last day of the apertura campaign, Banfield win the title for the first time in their history.

Sent off in a 2-0 defeat away to Internacional as Banfield are knocked out of the Libertadores Cup on away goals.

MAY 6, 2010

After signing for Porto in July, he makes his debut as a second-half sub in a 4-1 Portuguese Cup win at home to Limianos.

OCT 16, 2010

Scores his first goal for Porto, in a 3-1 Europa League win at home to CSKA Sofia.

DEC 15, 2010

Comes on as a 79th-minute sub in the 1-0 Europa League Final win against Braga in Dublin.

MAY 18, 2011

historic last-eight World Cup finish, it wasn't the Argentinian coach who everybody had thronged to see. Instead, that honour belonged to 22-year-old midfielder James Rodriguez.

In a sea of yellow shirts and Colombian flags that stretched as far as the horizon, cardboard cut-outs and placards dedicated to the number 10 festooned the crowds. "Grande James" read one; others were slightly more racy.

Two days earlier, and despite an acrimonious defeat by hosts Brazil in the quarter-finals, Colombia had exited the World Cup with their heads held high.

With six goals in just four-and-a-half games, Rodriguez had finished the tournament with the Golden Boot – which was a remarkable achievement for a midfielder not known for being a prolific goalscorer. But more than the goal tally, it was the mastery and control of his displays that set him apart.

His sumptuous turn and dink over Japan goalkeeper Eiji Kawashima in Colombia's final group game left several of the country's journalists in Cuiaba's Arena Pantanal in tears. But what was to come next would surpass even that exquisite manoeuvre.

Stamped in the mind as one of the iconic images of last summer's tournament, Rodriguez's breakthrough strike against Uruguay at the Maracana in the last 16 was the icing on the cake. Collecting Abel Aguilar's floated pass on his chest, and with his back to goal, he flicked a look at the goal over his shoulder, twisted his body and then fired home a delicious shot that struck the underside of the bar and nestled in the net. The goal of the year was concocted with the audacity, technique, class and maturity of a player whose vertiginous rise to the top had begun almost the day he was born.

Twenty two years earlier, and taking the name of his father, even as a baby Wilson James Rodriguez spent his weekends being dragged to the stadium of local top-flight side Cucuta, where his dad was one of the main stars. It provided an early insight into the life of a footballer, but also came with a warning. Rodriguez senior had once been good enough to play for Colombia's youth side, but his later career stalled, blighted by drink and indiscipline, and just three years after James was born, his mum, Pilar, had had enough.

Pilar left and returned to her home town of Ibague with her son in tow. Over the next decade, he and his dad would have little contact.

Into his father's shoes stepped Juan Carlos Restrepo, an ex-footballer who was now a systems engineer, and the two formed a close relationship that began with a love for the ball. During their early outings to the local park, Restrepo noticed early promise in the youngster, particularly in the way he trapped the ball and used his left foot.

Buying him his first pair of football boots, Restrepo took Rodriguez under his wing and began searching for a football academy in which to enrol him. However, cash was short, so when a job offer arrived from Bogota the new family upped sticks and the football school was put on hold.

But in the dizzy heights of the world's third-highest capital, Pilar struggled. It was cold and she was far from her family. A few months later she was back in Ibague, leaving Restrepo to visit at weekends.

During this short stint in the capital, the five-year-old Rodriguez played his first tournament for Sporting Cristal Colombia. It whetted the youngster's appetite and, despite continued financial woes, the family signed him up to the recently formed Academia Tolimense de Futbol.

Not long after, Pilar recalls her son arriving back from training and announcing: "I've decided, I'm going to be a professional footballer." It was just after the 1998 World Cup and he had just been given his first football shirt: the Roma number 10 of Francesco Totti, his first idol.

Shy and teased due to a stutter,

Wonder goal...scoring against Uruguay at Brazil 2014

> "He was at a disadvantage because he was always one-and-a-half years younger than everyone else. But this only made him work even harder"
>
> **Rodriguez's mentor, Juan Carlos Restrepo**

Celebration... at the World Cup homecoming

Scores a hat-trick as Porto beat Vitoria Guimaraes 6-2 in the Portuguese Cup Final to complete the treble.

MAY 22, 2011

Makes his Champions League debut for Porto in a 2-1 win at home to Shakhtar Donetsk.

SEP 13, 2011

Makes his full debut for Colombia in a 2-1 World Cup qualifying win away to Bolivia in La Paz.

OCT 11, 2011

Scores his first goal for Colombia, in a 1-0 World Cup qualifying win away to Peru in Lima.

JUN 3, 2012

Rodriguez ploughed all his energies into mastering the game. "The most impressive thing I saw in him was the way he played with his head up," recalls coach Armando "Yul" Calderon. "He had peripheral vision in searching for free space."

Whether on the training ground or back home on PlayStation, Rodriguez's life revolved around the beautiful game. His school work suffered as a result, but as time passed his family began believing in his talent. Pilar would eventually give up her job and Juan Carlos offered constant support.

Not yet 10, he won his first tournament at the Club Campestre championships. Helped by the struggling family's sacrifices in ploughing efforts into the prodigy's career, other titles followed. He became known for his free-kicks that he practised tirelessly, telling team-mates: "I'll not stop until I can strike the ball as good as Totti."

Heroes' welcome... fans line the streets of Bogota after the team's exploits in Brazil

Already the first glimpses of his innate talent were shining through; the technique of his left foot, his ball control and an ability to float into space or pull defences apart via a pinpoint pass.

But if some things came easy, others needed to be nurtured. "His profile was all wrong," says coach Calderon. "He would always receive the ball and then turn his back to goal."

The iron fist of Restrepo's schooling was also a constant feature. During one tournament, when he was 12, Rodriguez stormed off the field, broken by the pressure and criticism dished out by his godfather.

At the turn of the 21st century, the Colombian number 10 was gleaned from the template of one of the country's greatest players, Carlos "El Pibe" Valderrama. Aping his languid, technically rich style, Rodriguez was perhaps guilty of neglecting certain areas of his game. But as he entered his teenage years his raw talent made him Academia's star turn.

The games, tournaments and miles clocked up, and in 2004 Academia qualified for the Junior Pony Futbol championships, one of the world's most outstanding hotbeds of youth and infant talent. Of Pekerman's initial 30-man Colombia squad for the 2014 World Cup, 11 players had made their name at the Medellin event, including Radamel Falcao. The tournament would elevate 13-year-old Rodriguez to the nation's attention.

In Academia's first game, against Medellin, he masterminded a second-half comeback to earn a 2-2 draw. And among parents, friends and football

Has to settle for a runners-up medal as Braga beat Porto 1-0 in the Portuguese League Cup Final.

APR 13, 2013

Porto secure their third title in a row with a 2-0 win away to Pacos de Ferreira on the final day of the season.

MAY 19, 2013

Class act...getting the better of Brazil's Oscar during the World Cup

Makes his Monaco debut in a 2-0 win away to Bordeaux on the opening day of the Ligue 1 season.

AUG 10, 2013

Scores his first goal for Monaco with a 19th-minute free-kick in a 2-0 win at home against Rennes.

NOV 30, 2013

Scores twice against Uruguay as Colombia progress to the World Cup quarter-finals before losing to hosts Brazil.

JUN 28, 2014

agents in the crowd lurked a shady, but powerful figure.

Gustavo Upegui was the main shareholder at Envigado Football Club. He had lived across the road from the infamous drug kingpin Pablo Escobar as a child and the pair became good friends, maintaining that relationship throughout their lives. Countless witnesses have since lined up to testify against Upegui, who was thought by many to have been Escobar's right-hand man, and when US-trained police units killed the world's most wanted criminal in 1993, the authorities believe his narco kingdom slipped into Upegui's hands.

Like Escobar, Upegui was a keen football fan and Envigado were one of the best clubs in Colombia for nurturing talent. Having seen Rodriguez set the Pony Football tournament alight, he approached Academia boss Alvaro Guzman and asked him to name his price.

"He's not for sale," Guzman barked before disappearing down the players' tunnel. As one of Colombia's most powerful men, Upegui was not used to being rebuffed, and as Academia stormed their way out of the group and to the tournament Final, Rodriguez's stock rose to dizzying heights of adulation. "Even the girls wouldn't leave him alone," one bystander remembers.

In the Final, he scored straight from a corner and his side won the cup, and after being voted best player and finishing top goalscorer, the offers flooded in. But Upegui was one step ahead.

The Envigado boss bypassed the Academia coach and instead sought out Restrepo in the stands. When Rodriguez and the family arrived back in Ibague, Upegui phoned to make them an offer they couldn't refuse.

Along with sister Valentina and Simon the dog, the whole family uprooted once more, this time for Medellin. James joined the Envigado under-14s and Juan Carlos arranged private coaching from Omar "El Misio" Suarez, an ex-pro who was a renowned youth coach.

Life in the big city didn't get off to the best start, though. In one tournament Final against a weaker side, Rodriguez's frustration got the better of him and he was sent off. Furthermore, his slender frame and lack of strength started to become a telling factor when up against bigger, more athletic opponents.

Initially rejected for being too small by the Colombia youth side, Envigado's personal trainer put him on hormonal treatment similar to that taken by Lionel Messi at Barcelona. He bulked up and under El Misio's private training he also managed to lessen the dependency on his left foot.

"He wanted to be part of the Colombia set-up, but was at a disadvantage because he was always one-and-a-half years younger than everyone else," explains Restrepo. "But this only made him work even harder."

In May 2006 he became the second-youngest player to feature in the Colombian top division when he made his debut against his dad's former team, Cucuta, aged just 14. "You could tell he was ahead of the rest," says Envigado's fitness coach John Hernandez. "He suffered because he was small, but his technique was special."

Those 24 minutes from the bench served him well and the Colombia under-17s soon came knocking. But within six months Upegui had been murdered and Envigado were relegated to the second division.

For Rodriguez it proved to be a blessing in disguise. The Medellin side gambled on youth in aiming for a quick-fire return and the 15-year-old played 40 games as Envigado won both apertura and clausura championships.

"He was still too small but, with that special left foot and a quick mind, it would have been a crime not to have played him," says Envigado coach Jesus Barrios.

Sensing the time was right for a change, Restrepo sent a DVD of the boy's career to several FIFA agents. Boca Juniors, Lanus and Banfield all stepped forward, but despite being the least prestigious of the interested parties, Banfield offered the strongest assurances of a fast-track path into the first team and they paid

Youthful...his ID cards at the Academia Tolimense

> "I've decided, I'm going to be a professional footballer"
>
> **James Rodriguez, aged seven**

Winner...as a 13-year-old he was the star of the Academia side that won the Junior Pony Futbol tournament in 2014

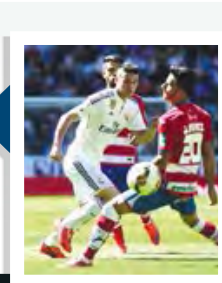
JUL 22, 2014 After just one season with Monaco he signs for Real Madrid.

AUG 12, 2014 Makes his Real debut in a UEFA Super Cup win against Sevilla in Cardiff.

AUG 19, 2014 Scores his first goal for Real Madrid, in the Spanish Super Cup first leg draw with Atletico Madrid.

DEC 20, 2014 Helps Real to beat San Lorenzo 2-0 in the Club World Cup Final.

APR 5, 2015 Returns to action after a two-month absence through injury as Real Madrid thrash Granada 9-1.



$440,000 for half of his transfer rights. If Envigado gave Rodriguez his big chance, Banfield would provide the 16-year-old with his greatest test.

For the first time in his life he was without the support of his family. Alone in Buenos Aires he struggled badly and at one point almost returned home. Frustrated at playing in Banfield's fourth team and dismissively called "the Colombian" by reserve coach Raul Wensel, he felt unwanted.

Things only picked up when his family joined him in Argentina and Jorge Burruchaga took the coach's job. Having beefed up down the gym, Rodriguez was handed his big chance. The 17-year-old came off the bench and played 33 minutes of Banfield's opening match in 2009 to become the youngest foreigner to play in the Argentinan top flight.

A 30-yard strike against Rosario followed and in the second half of the season he became a regular in the side, playing on the left of midfield with more defensive duties than he was used to. And in December 2009, Banfield were crowned champions for the first time in their history with Rodriguez still only 18.

Coach Julio Cesar Falcioni said afterwards: "We want him to stay, but we can't stand in his way. He's going to be a great player."

Six months later Porto offered €5.1 million and Rodriguez followed in the trajectory of Colombian team-mate Falcao.

Again, he began at the bottom and had to wait his turn but, just nine days after marrying future Arsenal goalkeeper David Ospina's sister, he made his Porto debut in a 3-1 victory over CSKA Sofia. It was the end of 2010 and Rodriguez was still relatively unknown – but the following year all that would change.

He began by guiding the Colombia under-20s to victory as best player in the Toulon tournament and followed it with a series of impressive performances in the 2011 Under-20 World Cup. New national coach Leonel Alvarez was watching and a month later he named Rodriguez in the Colombia squad for their first World Cup qualifying match in Bolivia.

"It was a dream come true," says Restrepo. "We talked after he was called up and he saw that this was a new stage that came with even more responsibility."

Colombia won 2-1 and 20-year-old Rodriguez played the full 90 minutes, but two qualifiers later fickle federation bosses turfed Alvarez out of the door.

However, not even Rodriguez could have expected what came next.

A regular first-team player at Porto, he was given the number 10 shirt of Valderrama by new boss Pekerman.

The weight of expectation that had crumbled others didn't faze him, and as Colombia trailblazed through their first successful qualifying campaign for 16 years, the youngster developed into the team's most important player. A €45m move to Monaco followed on from three trophy-laden seasons in Portugal, and with no Champions League commitments, the relative calm of the French Riviera perhaps ensured he arrived at the 2014 World Cup in optimal condition.

His achievements didn't stop in Brazil. An €80m transfer to Real Madrid, facilitated by his agent Jorge Mendes, elevated him to galactico status in the summer of 2014. Then, after establishing himself as an important player in a star-studded Real side, he wore the captain's armband for his country in a friendly victory over the United States in November.

A broken metatarsal in his right foot, sustained against Sevilla in February, may have slowed his progress in 2015, but he returned to action in April and, at 23, he has already achieved more than most in the game.

With his prime years ahead, Rodriguez seems set to one day become Colombia's most important player of all time. **WS**

> "We want him to stay, but we can't stand in his way. He's going to be a great player"
>
> **Banfield coach Julio Cesar Falcioni on selling Rodriguez**

Impressive...a league champion at Banfield

Galactico...playing for Real Madrid in the UEFA Super Cup against Sevilla

A-list couple...with wife Daniela, who is the sister of David Ospina, at the Ballon d'Or awards in Zurich

James RODRIGUEZ

the numbers game

BEST GOAL

2014 Puskas award for best goal of last year

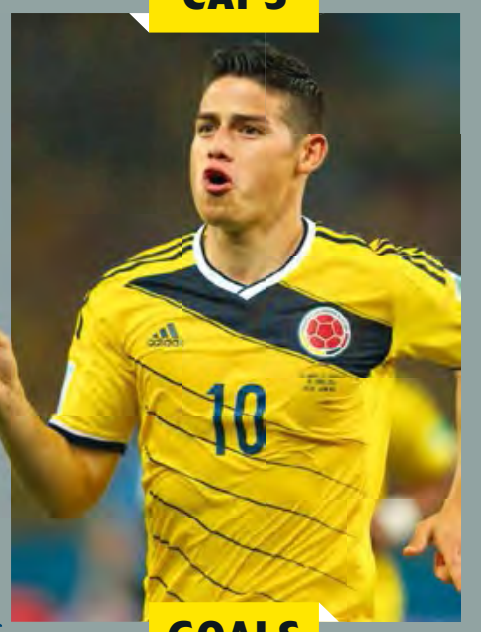
1st — **JAMES RODRIGUEZ** (Colombia v Uruguay, World Cup)

2nd — **STEPHANIE ROCHE** (Peamount United v Wexford Youths, Irish Women's League)

3rd — **ROBIN VAN PERSIE** (Holland v Spain, World Cup

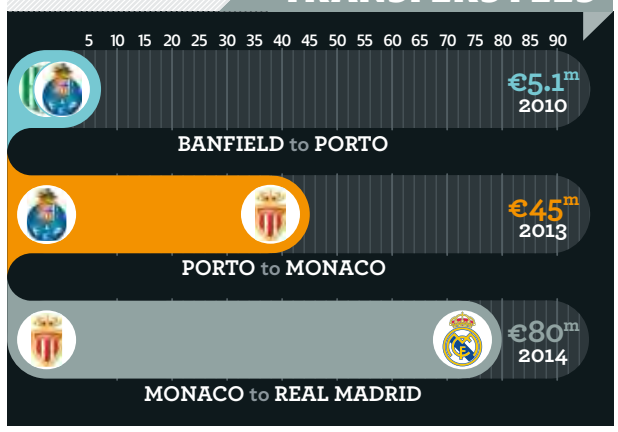
COLOMBIA

32 CAPS



12 GOALS

TRANSFERS FEES



FALSE FACT

345,000

number of shirts, according to Spanish newspaper *Sport*, that were reported to have been sold within 48 hours of his signing for Real Madrid. The club's kit manufacturer, Adidas, later said this was untrue

HONOURS

ENVIGADO				
Colombian Second division	2007			
BANFIELD				
Primera				
Argentinian Apertura	2009			
PORTO				
Europa League	2011			
Portuguese Liga	2011	2012	2013	
Portuguese Cup	2011			
Portuguese Super Cup	2010	2011	2012	
REAL MADRID				
UEFA Super Cup	2014			
Club World Cup	2014			
COLOMBIA UNDER-20S				
Toulon Tournament	2011			

2014 WORLD CUP TOP SCORERS

Robin Van Persie	Neymar	Lionel Messi	Thomas Muller	James Rodriguez
Holland	Brazil	Argentina	Germany	Colombia

FAN-FEST

45,000

THE NUMBER OF FANS WHO TURNED UP TO WELCOME HIM TO REAL MADRID

(* as of 09.04.15)

Marcelo Bielsa: football's independent-minded idealist

Marseille's defeat by Paris Saint-Germain exposed both the strengths and weaknesses of their coach's man-marking system, says Jonathan Wilson

Marcelo Bielsa has never been orthodox. Whatever else he is, he is an independent thinker, somebody who has the capacity to look at every problem afresh and find his own solutions to it. It was at Newell's Old Boys in the early 1990s that Bielsa began prioritising pressing and it has remained the basis of his philosophy ever since. But although it was, in many ways, similar to the style that was coming to dominate Europe at the same time, there was one big difference: while the likes of Arrigo Sacchi, Louis Van Gaal and Egil Olsen liked their teams to use zonal marking, Bielsa often relied on man-marking.

The development of zonal marking in the 1950s is usually seen as having been key to the adoption of pressing as a consistent tactical approach. The Brazilian coach Zeze Moreira is usually credited with having been the inventor, though it would probably be truer to say that he was one pioneer among many.

Once the sort of fluidity practised by the Austrian *Wunderteam* of the early 1930s and taken to new heights by the great Hungary side of the early 1950s started to become widespread, defences had to find a way to react. Man-marking, as England found at Wembley in the 6-3 defeat by Hungary in 1953, had a tendency either to leave spaces in the back line or let opponents roam free.

One of the best ways was for defenders to hold their positions, picking up players who came into their zones. Once that was accepted, football became a far more tactically flexible game because those zones could be adjusted without the first reference being the opponent.

Sacchi's dictum was that a player had to take his position based on four factors: the opponent, space, the ball and his team-mates. And the adoption of a zonal system made it easier for a team to impose itself on its opponent, even if it didn't have such gifted individuals.

It also enabled pressing, something pioneered in the 1960s by Viktor Maslov at Dynamo Kiev. Three or four players could go to the ball, safe in the knowledge that their team-mates would automatically fill their zones and pick up the opponents operating in them. Inevitably, certain zones

Deep...Ibrahmovic ties up Marseille's Fanni (left) and Romao

would be left empty, but they would be the zones into which the ball was least likely to be played at that moment. If four players hounded an opponent in one corner of the pitch, for example, it could safely be assumed that he wouldn't, under pressure, be able to deliver an accurate 70-yard pass to the other end of the pitch.

The rationale is essentially no different to that still applied by Pep Guardiola at Bayern Munich, where he has the club's training pitches divided into zones so that his players can practise moving into the correct areas at the correct times to overman without leaving damaging spaces elsewhere.

But Bielsa doesn't do that. There is, inevitably, a zonal element to some of his play, but he seems to favour a man-to-man approach, as was seen perhaps most clearly in the 3-2 home defeat by Paris Saint-Germain in *Le Clasique*, a game that exposed both the strengths and weaknesses of his approach.

In that match, all six of Bielsa's defensive players were man-marking. His system is usually best thought of as a 3-3-1-3 but Alaixys Romao, nominally the right-sided centre-back, pursued Javier Pastore even when he dropped deep. With the two wing-backs, Brice Dja Djedje and Benjamin Mendy, pushed high and coming inside to help the midfield press, Marseille were often left short at the back. Mario Lemina was presumably supposed to drop in to become a third centre-back, but that plan was only partially successful, which is why PSG looked so dangerous on the counter-attack, particularly in the first half.

Again and again space opened up on the right side of Marseille's defence as Romao pushed forwards, and the situation was further complicated when Zlatan Ibrahimovic dropped deep, pulling Rod Fanni out of the centre – exactly the problem Harry Johnston had when trying to deal with Nandor Hidegkuti at Wembley in 1953.

In charge...Bielsa knows what he wants

> "We were never comfortable. I knew PSG would dominate play with their passing and our tactics didn't work."
>
> **Marcelo Bielsa accepts defeat in *Le Clasique***

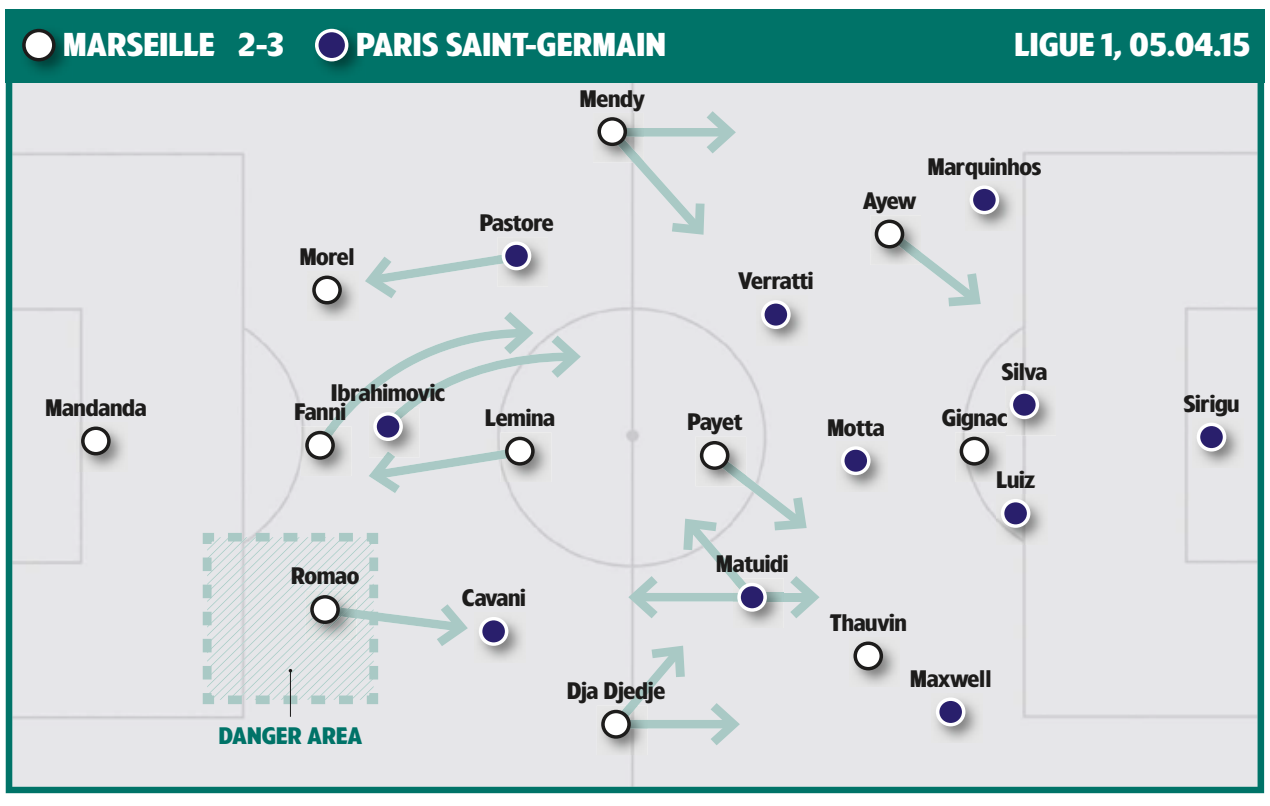
That's the great drawback with man-to-man systems: they can be dragged out of shape by even quite simple movements form the opposition. And had Lemina been more efficient in his covering role, what would he have done had, say, Marco Verratti started to push forward more? Maybe that was part of Bielsa's gamble: that given the nature of the game PSG wouldn't open out.

The advantage was seen in Marseille's second goal. Verratti had dropped deep, between the splitting central defenders, to play the ball out from the back. As he advanced, though, he found three Marseille players closing him down. His pass to Pastore was perhaps a little hurried and Romao, advancing just inside the PSG half, made the challenge before playing a simple pass to Andre-Pierre Gignac. With PSG's defence open and no time to get back, Gignac had essentially a free run on goal. The man-marking and the pressing had allowed the ball to be recovered high up the pitch and that, in turn, made the break all the more dangerous. From the ball being recovered to striking the back of the net took less than five seconds.

PSG had created their own problems by having Verratti initiate a move from between the central defenders. But still, you wonder whether the potential rewards are worth the risk. It's true man-marking is now so unusual that its very novelty can lead teams to struggle against it, but Marseille's results against their rivals at the top of the table suggest the best know how to deal with it. Four games against PSG and Lyon this season yielded a single point and they also lost at Monaco.

Not for the first time with Bielsa, the thought occurs he may be rather more effective if he allowed his idealism to be tempered by a dash of the pragmatic. **WS**

Opportunity knocks...Gignac scores for Marseille



On the road to success

The backing of Volkswagen has driven the Lower Saxony side on to bigger and better things

WORDS: Nick Bidwell

These are, without a shadow of doubt, the best of times for Martin Winterkorn. Not only has Volkswagen's chairman of the board steered his company to within a quick gear-change of taking over from Toyota as the world's most popular car manufacturer, he also has the considerable satisfaction of seeing VfL Wolfsburg, VW's footballing arm, claim a place in next season's Champions League.

Winterkorn and the club's chief executive, Klaus Allofs, make no secret of their desire to definitively establish Wolfsburg – who were sensational German champions back in 2009 – as the second strongest team in the land, behind the all-powerful Bayern Munich. And judging by the events of the last few months, the process is well under way

"*Die Wolfe*" (the wolves) have been a revelation with the fluidity of their interplay, their carefree swagger and the prime-time brilliance of Belgian attacking midfielder Kevin De Bruyne and prolific Dutch striker Bas Dost. They have been safely ensconced in ▸

Wolf pack...a fan flies the flag at the Volkswagen Arena

WOLFSBURG
LIMITED EDITION
CORUSAN
htc one (M8)
RESPECT
UEFA.com

second place in the Bundesliga for most of the season and, although they trail the runaway leaders by some distance, they certainly laid down a marker when hammering Bayern 4-1 at the Volkswagen Arena in January.

Seemingly able to slice through at will on the break, Wolfsburg had the usually imperial Bayern scurrying around in sheer panic. Had the hosts been a little more clinical, an even wider margin of victory could have ensued. No wonder Winterkorn looked so pleased with himself in the directors' box.

Was this a sign of a forthcoming shift in the domestic balance of power? Not quite, according to Allofs, who says: "Without getting carried away, we're looking to taste the Champions League again and become the principal challenger to Bayern in Germany. The objective is to pull away from competitors like Dortmund, Leverkusen and Schalke and, at the same time, hope to reduce the gap separating us from Bayern.

"We're clearly ahead of schedule and I believe we can move closer to Bayern. But for now, achieving that second spot in the hierarchy is more important to us than really going toe-to-toe with Bayern.

"Munich is a world city – we're a town with 130,000 inhabitants. We know we will not achieve this overnight. We have to be patient. However, we're sure we're on the right road."

Allofs and Wolfsburg mean business. As a sporting offshoot of the mighty Volkswagen – who recently posted sales of €202.5billion for 2014 and an operating profit of €12.7bn - VfL are ahead of the game before a ball is kicked and benefit from an annual subsidy of some €60 million.

> "Football needs investment and that's as certain as an amen in church
> Stephan Gruhsem, Winterkorn's deputy at VW

Although Bayern have spent considerably more on signings in the last half-dozen years – €317m to Wolfsburg's €246m – the Wolfsburger are comfortably Germany's next biggest investors in talent. Of late they have raised the stakes with each key transaction: Borussia Dortmund's Croat schemer Ivan Perisic cost €8m in January 2013; Brazilian midfield enforcer Luiz Gustavo joined the following year for €20m; De Bruyne was taken from Chelsea 16 months ago for €22m and striker Andre Schurrle arrived from the same club in an eye-watering €32m deal.

News of the Schurrle scoop, the third-largest transfer in Bundesliga history, had rivals and pundits queuing up to claim Wolfsburg were deliberately inflating the market, that they had paid way over the odds for someone who was not an automatic choice for Chelsea or Germany.

Arrival...new signing Schurrle on his first day at training

"I didn't hear an outcry when Bayern signed an expensive player or when Dortmund bought Ciro Immobile," counters Allofs. "This debate shows there are a lot of halfwits around."

Expect more of the same, adds Winterkorn: "We don't plan to stop with Schurrle. In the next few years, we're going to invest heavily. We want to be competitive at the highest international level – and to be so for a long time."

From a purely neutral standpoint, there is much to admire in the Wolfsburg story. The single-mindedness they have displayed since clambering out of the German third tier in 1992. The wonderful run of 10 springtime victories which swept Felix Magath's side to the Bundesliga title in 2009. Their determination to attack home and away this season, notably winning 5-4 and 5-3 at Bayer Leverkusen and Werder Bremen in consecutive road trips in February. But popular they probably never will be.

A substantial proportion of German fans – the vast majority of whom follow clubs run as member associations – see the likes of Wolfsburg, Leverkusen, who are owned by the Bayer pharmaceutical conglomerate and Hoffenheim, bankrolled

Victory parade...after lifting the Bundesliga title in 2009

Revitalised...De Bruyne has been in fine form after being a peripheral figure at Chelsea

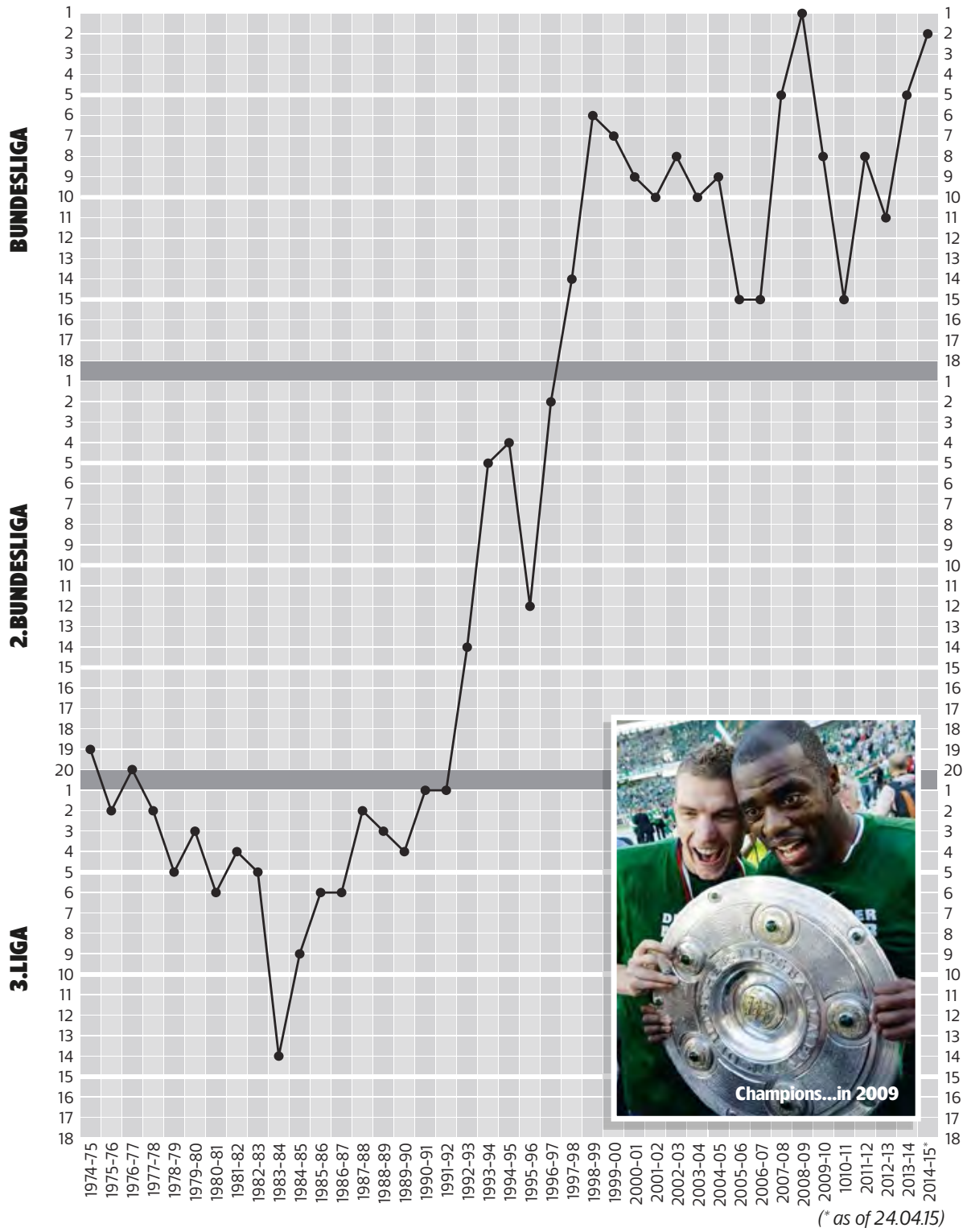
by software entrepreneur Dietmar Hopp, as nothing more than corporate blots on the landscape; as plastic Johnny-come-latelys lacking history, fans and passion.

At times, this thrust for football purity can turn extremely poisonous, and the antipathy towards the Wolfsburg-VW model is not confined to the stands of Bundesliga grounds and social media.

Ambitious high-ranking clubs who used to only have the vast financial power of Bayern to worry about, now have another Wolf of Wall Street to contend with in Lower Saxony. Cue claims of unfair competition, of one less Champions League spot to aim for and "unworthy" Bundesliga teams who don't have enough support on their travels

"Here we have a club with endless economic resources," declared Hans-Joachim Watzke, Dortmund's CEO, at a Sports Fair in Dusseldorf earlier this year. "I've always said when VW really push the boat out – and this is now the case – all the limits will be bust open. If you are on

WOLFSBURG LEAGUE POSITION FROM 1975-PRESENT



(* as of 24.04.15)

a precipice and you know there's a bigger, wider and thicker blanket to break your fall, you can plan so much better."

Inevitably, the Wolfsburg movers and shakers beg to differ. "Football needs investment and that's as certain as an amen in church," argues Stephan Gruhsem, Winterkorn's deputy at VW.

"Supporters demand quality football every Saturday. This costs. These large amounts have to be found. That's why I absolutely don't accept the criticism.

"I believe it's a good thing for German football to count on strong investors."

Different voices, different opinions. Should Wolfsburg be condemned for their VW connection and the fact that they sit fourth from bottom of the Bundesliga average attendance table with 27,600? Or do they deserve praise for an 18-year top-flight stint during which they became

Cheers...Magath toasts Wolfsburg's first-ever Bundesliga title success

one of only four clubs – along with Dortmund, Bremen and Stuttgart – to have wrestled the championship from Bayern's grasp this millennium?

Wolfsburg have posted a transfer balance over the past five years of minus €108.28m – a figure which contrasts most unfavourably with Dortmund's (minus €59.69), Leverkusen (minus €18.28m), Borussia Monchengladbach (minus €9.67m) and Schalke (minus €6.68m). As such, nobody should be surprised that UEFA currently is conducting an inquiry into whether Financial Fairplay regulations have been breached.

But in the face of the suggestion that Wolfsburg have exceeded permitted losses of €45m a year over three years and effectively benefit from an automotive blank cheque to cover the debts, club officials remain remarkably relaxed. Allofs

Memories...fans pay tribute to Wolfsburg midfielder Junior Malanda, who died in a car crash, in January, aged 20

> "Without getting carried away, we're looking to taste the Champions League again and become the principal challenger to Bayern in Germany"
>
> **Wolfsburg chief executive Klaus Allofs**

believes the issue will be resolved when the European governing body fully understands the nature of Wolfsburg's working relationship with VW.

VfL finance chief Wolfgang Hotze sings the same special case song. He reasons: "For each payment, we receive a clear, regulated service or item in return. The assumption that VW simply pay for everything is not true.

"In the last three years, we've only made a loss once – and that was nowhere near €45m or even €30m."

Solid...defending a free-kick against Freiburg in the quarter-finals of this season's German Cup

Should the bean-counters and legal eagles in Nyon judge that the symbiotic arrangement of club and car-maker constitute "balance sheet doping", a heavy fine, a transfer cap or even a European competition ban could follow. In this worst case scenario, how would VW react?

Top brass at the Volkswagen Arena tend to attribute the criticism of their structure and methods mainly to jealousy. However, it's also fair to say that they are reaping the bitter harvest of VW's privileged position and multiple connections within the German game.

Because VW subsidiary Audi owns an 8.8 per cent stake in Bayern, Winterkorn and Rupert Stadler, Audi's CEO, sit on the Bayern board. Volkswagen also sponsor the German Cup, and the company have both advertising and sponsorship ties with some 16 first and second division clubs.

Too many conflicts of issue and blurred lines, claims Dortmund's Watzke. Not so, hits back Winterkorn.

"The two clubs we offer significant support to are Wolfsburg and Bayern," he says. "I have a well-known love of both clubs, but I stay on the outside while others make the decisions.

"Generally, VW's engagements in football are always business-driven and related to car sales in that region. Why shouldn't the passion and love of football and cars not come together business-wise?"

The marriage of VW's cash and the acumen of Allofs is, in many ways, the perfect match. As intelligent and calculating as he was in his playing days as a free-scoring striker for West Germany and a host of Bundesliga and French clubs, Allofs is undoubtedly one of the best football administrators in the whole of Europe. After working a 13-year restricted budget miracle at Bremen – securing a league and cup double in 2004, the German Cup in 2009 and five straight ▸

THE POWER CURVE

The key figures behind Wolfsburg

KLAUS ALLOFS
High-profile managing director with a flair for transfer bargains and a good business brain. He was headhunted in 2012, with the task of making the team competitive and putting finances in order, after success in a similar role at Werder Bremen. Won 56 caps for West Germany as a striker.

MARTIN WINTERKORN
Chairman of the Volkswagen group since 2007, he sets the tone for the club's ambitions and money made available to the football department. He is also chairman of the VW subsidiary Audi, who have a stake in Bayern Munich.

FRANCISCO JAVIER GARCIA SANZ
Madrid-born businessman who, after joining VW in 1993, swiftly ascended the corporate ladder and became club chairman in 2009. Played a key role in ousting underperforming coach Felix Magath in 2012.

WOLFGANG HOTZE
Wolfsburg's finance chief, he is the man with the task of holding golden purse strings. A VW employee for 35 years and formerly the club management spokesman.

THOMAS ROTTGERMANN
Former commercial manager at Borussia Monchengladbach, he is responsible for corporate development, infrastructure, sponsoring and the women's team, who have been the European champions for the past two years.

THE STADIUM

Night moves...the Volkswagen Arena prepares to host a Europa league tie

Glass facade...the view from the stadium approach

Although the atmosphere at Wolfsburg's 30,000-capacity €53million Volkswagen Arena may have improved due to an upturn in the team's fortunes in the new millennium, the match-day experience simply cannot be compared to the cauldrons of noise generated at Dortmund or Schalke.

Just like the atmosphere at that other German *werkself* (factory-owned club), Bayer Leverkusen, the ultimate impression is that of the family-friendly fan-base; the spectator rather than the supporter.

With average attendances over the last five years of around 28,000, Wolfsburg have one of the smallest followings in the country. Only Hoffenheim, Freiburg and Paderborn have pulled in less in the Bundesliga this season, and it speaks volumes that even with Dieter Hecking's side performing so well, sell-outs have proved few and far between.

Die Wolfe might be the only team in the country capable of giving all-powerful Bayern Munich a run for their money at the moment, but the high-fliers do not even rank among the most popular sides in the north-west state of Lower Saxony.

In terms of supporter fanaticism and street cred, they very much remain a poor third in their home region, behind top-flight Hanover and second-tier Eintracht Braunschweig.

Whereas Hanover and Braunschweig fight like cat and dog whenever they meet, a Wolfsburg-Hanover derby engenders nothing like the same emotions. And in the final analysis, it's all a question of location and heritage.

Compare and contrast Hanover and Braunschweig, the big-city clubs with long histories, and the small-town Volkswagen works side who first broke into the Bundesliga in 1997. While Hanover and Braunschweig have slugged it out for over a century, Wolfsburg and Hanover have only been in the Bundesliga together since 2002-03, facing each other a mere 20-odd times.

Access all levels... the stadium gives the impression of being friendly but without soul

Big backer...the VW logo

Champions League qualifications – he jumped at the chance of a new and exciting project at Wolfsburg.

On Allof's arrival in November 2012 the scene he encountered was, to a large extent, a disaster zone. In little more than three years, the team had gone from national champions to relegation candidates, and in every corner lay the broken consequences of complacency and a string of poor buys and coaching appointments: Armin Veh, Steve McClaren and Magath, whose return to the scene of his greatest triumph swiftly went sour.

Here was an organisation crying out for stability, long-term thinking and common sense. And it would not take long for Allofs to make up the shortfall. Rational, astute, persuasive and a tremendous transfer-market operator, the new CEO brought a new professionalism and sharper focus to the running of the club. In contrast to the Magath eras – when the latter combined the roles of coach, director of sport and CEO – there is now a far less dictatorial chain of command, which has proved infinitely more effective.

An advocate of working hand in glove with his coach, Allofs only had one first-team boss, Thomas Schaaf, in his entire time at Bremen. All the signs point to him enjoying an equally long partnership with current Wolfsburg boss Dieter Hecking, who had previously been in charge at Hanover and Nuremberg.

> "In the next few years, we're going to invest heavily. We want to be competitive at the highest international level. And to be so for a long time"
>
> Volkswagen chairman Martin Winterkorn

Animal magic...the Wolfsburg mascot takes the spotlight before the big clash with Bayern Munich

Loud and proud... Dost has turned his fortunes around

Like Schaaf, Hecking might not be the most charismatic or media-friendly of figures, but he undeniably knows how to put a winning side together. He has a natural authority, is excellent at keeping the players on their toes and has much more tactical know-how than some have given him credit for, proving equally at home with an expansive game as ordering his charges to pull back and counter attack

For all the big-money signings at his disposal, he has not hesitated to promote worthy youngsters such as centre-back Robin Knoche and creative midfielder Maximilian Arnold. He has also turned Dost from an out-of-touch front man into a goal machine and successfully switched De Bruyne from the left-side role to a freewheeling central position this term – a change which has proved the spark for the Wolfsburg rise and rise.

Only 15 months since being rescued from the Chelsea fringes, De Bruyne has become hot property, but Wolfsburg have no intention of cashing in on the Belgian. "We don't have any need to sell and realise that we have to keep our best players if we are to conquer Europe," insists club supervisory-board head Francisco Javier Garcia Sanz.

One of the continent's form sides so far this year, Wolfsburg see themselves as a de-luxe vehicle whose design is thought to be a winner. The engine purrs, the fittings are great and all they need now is more road-testing and a spot of showroom polish.

"Bayern are several lengths ahead and the only way Wolfsburg will overtake them is if Bayern become tired of winning," declares former Wolfsburg general manger Dieter Hoeness. "Nevertheless, Allofs and Hecking are step by step building a superb team. What they are doing is exceptional and impressive." **WS**

THE COACH

DIETER HECKING
Age 50
(12.09.64)
Former police officer who replaced Bernd Schuster in 2012 after spells with Lubeck, Alemannia Aachen, Hanover and Nuremberg. Once pigeon-holed as a one-dimensional, authoritarian leader he has blossomed, displaying more variety in his tactics and man-management techniques.

THE KIT

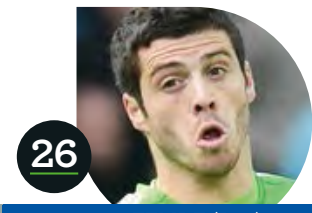
THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS

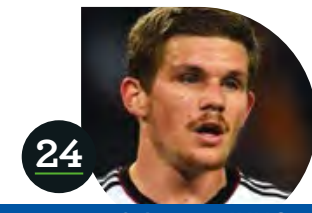
1 Diego BENAGLIO (Swi)
Age 31 (08.09.83)
Bundesliga winner who has been captain since 2012. With the club for seven years and has played at two World Cups.

20 Max GRUN
Age 28 (05.04.87)
Former youth international who spent seven years at Bayern Munich. Signed from Greuther Furth at the start of last season.

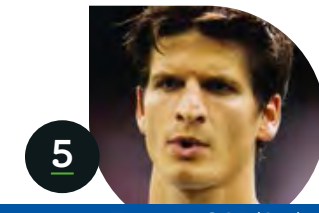
DEFENDERS



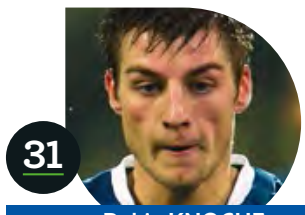
26 FELIPE (Bra)
Age 27 (07.08.87)
Centre-back who previously played in Brazil, Belgium and Portugal. Was sidelined for seven months after suffering a minor stroke.



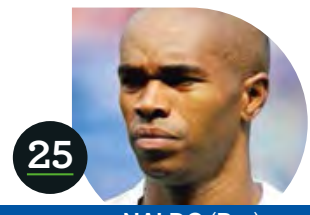
24 Sebastian JUNG
Age 24 (22.06.90)
Right-back who was signed from Eintracht Frankfurt for €2.5m in May 2014. Made his debut for Germany the previous week.



5 Timm KLOSE (Swi)
Age 26 (09.05.88)
Frankfurt-born, he moved to Basle aged five and was in Switzerland's 2012 Olymp team. Back-up to Naldo and Knoche.



31 Robin KNOCHE
Age 22 (22.05.92)
Central defender who has been one of the Bundesliga's brightest stars this term. With Wolfsburg since the age of 12 and a fine reader of a game.

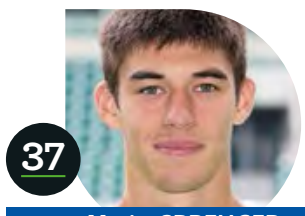


25 NALDO (Bra)
Age 32 (10.09.82)
Has formed an effective partnership with Knoche and a big threat at set-pieces. Has been dogged by knee problems.

2 Patrick OCHS
Age 30 (14.05.84)
Fiery former under-21 international who has missed much of this season with a cruciate ligament injury and is set for a free move in June.

34 Ricardo RODRIGUEZ (Swi)
Age 22 (25.08.92)
First choice left-back for club and country. Strikes a great free-kick, but can look shaky at times. Previously with home-town club Zurich.

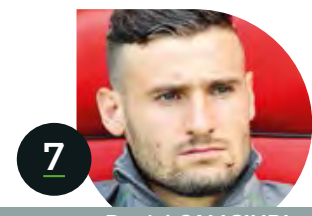
4 Marcel SCHAFER
Age 30 (07.06.84)
Wingback who is no longer first choice but has played more Bundesliga games than any one in the club's history and tops its all-time assists' list.



37 Moritz SPRENGER
Age 20 (22.02.95)
Recently called into the national under-20 squad, the east German central defender has looked the part when called upon.

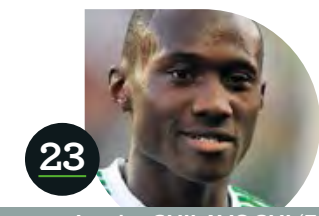
MIDFIELDERS

27 Maximilian ARNOLD
Age 20 (27.05.94)
Wolfsburg's youngest debutant – at 17 years, five months and 30 days – he is in fine goalscoring form and a national star in the making.



7 Daniel CALIGIURI
Age 27 (15.01.88)
German-born, of Italian descent, his elder brother, Marco, plays for Eintracht Braunschweig. Happy on either flank.

14 Kevin DE BRUYNE (Blg)
Age 23 (28.06.91)
A revelation since arriving in January 2014 from Chelsea. Provided 16 Bundesliga assists by April – the most in any of Europe's top five leagues.



23 Josuha GUILAVOGUI (Fra)
Age 24 (19.09.90)
A holding midfielder signed on a two-year loan from Atletico Madrid in the summer after one Liga game. Has Guinean roots but capped by France.

22 Luiz GUSTAVO (Bra)
Age 27 (23.07.87)
Plays in the holding role, where his strength in the tackle and good distribution makes him such a favourite of Brazil coach Dunga.

10 Aaron HUNT
Age 28 (04.09.86)
Versatile operator who left Werder Bremen last summer but starts most games on the bench and complains that Hecking is ignoring him.

9 Ivan PERISIC (Cro)
Age 26 (02.02.89)
Left-sided talent signed from Borussia Dortmund during the 2012-13 season but may be off now that Schurrle has pitched up.

30 Paul SEGUIN
Age 20 (29.03.95)
Son of Wolfgang Seguin, a 1974 European Cup-winners Cup winner with Magdeburg. Hard working, he signed his first pro contract last year.

15 Christian TRASCH
Age 27 (01.09.87)
Defensive midfielder who has lost his way since joining from Stuttgart for €9m in 2011. An ankle injury deprived him of a 2010 World Cup spot.

8 VIEIRINHA (Por)
Age 29 (24.01.86)
Busy right-sided winger or full-back signed from Greek club PAOK in January 2012 Was in Portugal's squad at last year's World Cup.

29 ZHANG Xizhe (Chn)
Age 24 (23.01.91)
Bought from Beijing Guoan in January. Marketing ploy or genuine swoop, he won over the media with a few words in German at his unveiling.

FORWARDS

3 Nicklas BENDTNER (Den)
Age 27 (16.01.88)
Has struggled for a starting place since arriving last summer after nine years at Arsenal but is a regular for his national side.

12 Bas DOST (Hol)
Age 25 (31.05.89)
Injury woes and a struggle to fit in are over. The first Dutchman to score four in a Bundesliga game, he made his Holland debut against Turkey in March.

17 Andre SCHURRLE
Age 24 (06.11.90)
Pacy and direct, the World Cup winner's €32m move from Chelsea had fans heatedly debating the value-for-money issue. Needs more consistency.

(All ages as of 24.04.15)

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

Talentscout

LOCALLY SOURCED SENSATIONS

WORDS: Nick Bidwell

3 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT WILLIAMS

- As a teenager, he had offers to join Real Sociedad, Zaragoza and Osasuna, but only had eyes for Athletic Bilbao, the side he grew up supporting.
- In his first full season with the club, 2012-13 he scored 34 goals in 38 games for the youth team.
- He recently had the release clause in his contract increased from €6million to €20m.

Inaki WILLIAMS

Forward, 20 (15.06.94)
Athletic Bilbao & Spain

In a sentence

The Basque-born son of a Ghanaian father and Liberian mother has taken Spanish football by storm of late, netting in the Europa League against Torino to become Bilbao's first-ever black goalscorer, starring in the shock 1-0 Liga victory over Real Madrid and representing Spain's under-21 side.

What they say

"If he's here [in the Bilbao first team], it's because he deserves it," says club coach Ernesto Valverde. "The boy has a very good attitude to training and wants to learn. He's working superbly and we're very happy with him. We have strong competition for places at this club and he has to prove himself worthy of being a starter." Iban Lumbreras, his coach as a teenager at Pamplona, says: "He comes from an environment where nothing was handed to him on a plate. He's very hungry and determined. He didn't have the advantages in his daily life that other kids of his age had."

The story so far

Brought up in the Navarre region, he was on Athletic Bilbao's radar from the age of 10, while playing in the schoolboy ranks of affiliate club Pamplona before featuring for Athletic's youth team and reserves. He also had a spell on loan at the club's third-tier feeder outfit Baskonia. After piling up the goals for Athletic B in the first half of this season, he was promoted to the first-team squad late last year, making his Liga debut against Cordoba in December.

> "He comes from an environment where nothing was handed to him on a plate"
>
> Iban Lumbreras, coach at Pamplona

The next step

While a number of big clubs – notably Manchester City – are already loitering with intent, Bilbao believe they can keep him at San Mames for a couple more seasons at least. He has a deep affection for the club, identifies with its traditions and is grounded enough to know that it's far too early to fly the nest. Although used by Valverde on either flank, he will surely earn his corn as a central striker in the future.

Strengths

Quick, agile, physically strong and hard working. He excels in his working up and down the front line and coming deep to find space. Good in his decoy runs, not easily dispossessed and a natural finisher.

Weaknesses

Even though Bilbao have a reputation for a British-type game, they have yet to rectify his decidedly average ability in the air.

Danilo CATALDI

Midfielder, 20 (06.08.94)
Lazio & Italy
Born and brought up in the shadow of Rome's Colosseum, the Italy under-21 is a 100 per cent *laziali*, so much so that he once turned down Manchester United. Equally at ease in box-to-box mode, sitting deep or playing others in further forward, Lazio coach Stefano Pioli calls him "the complete midfielder."

Goncalo PACIENCIA

Forward, 20 (01.08.94)
Porto & Portugal
The son of former Porto and Portugal striker Domingos Paciencia, he has more physical presence than his father and thrives playing with his back to goal. Marked his first-team debut in January with a League Cup goal against Braga.

Filip HELANDER

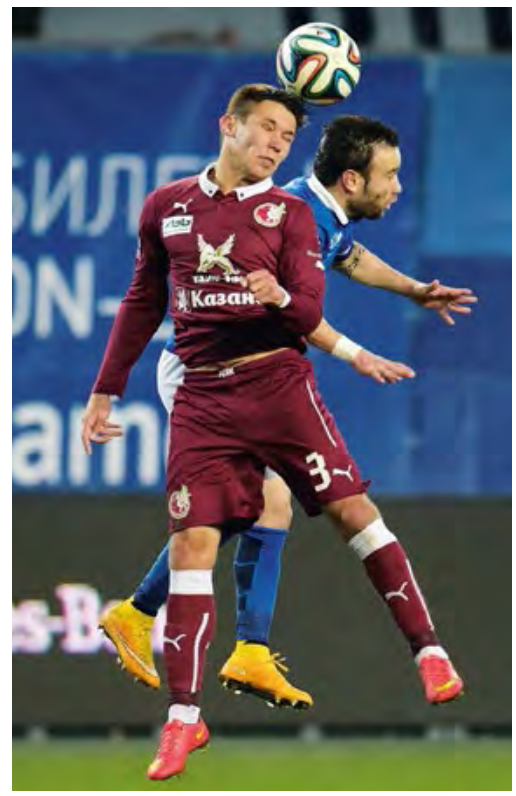
Defender, 22 (22.04.93)
Malmo & Sweden
A key figure in his club's back-to-back Swedish league titles of 2013 and 2014, his six games in the Champions League this season – against Juventus, Atletico Madrid and Olympiakos – have put the 6ft 4in centre-back within a short pass of making the breakthrough into the national side.

Marc STENDERA

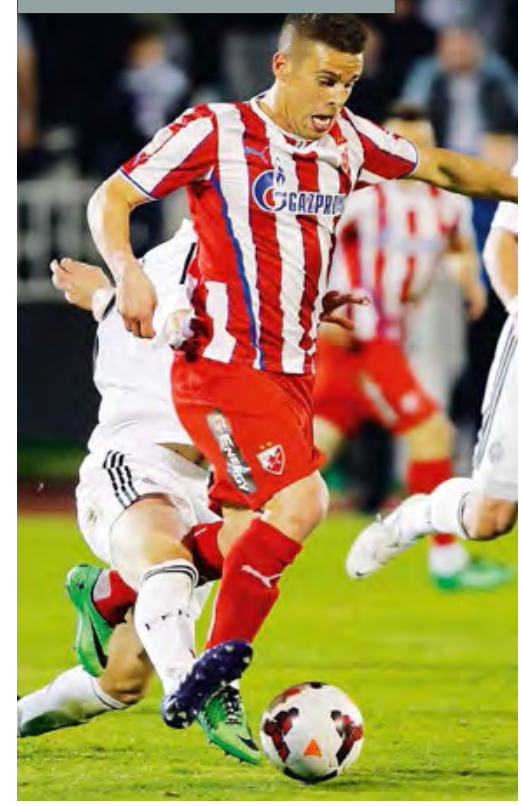
Midfielder, 19 (10.12.95)
Eintracht Frankfurt & Germany
On the books of Eintracht since 2010, the attacking midfielder has made an amazing recovery after tearing cruciate ligaments in his right knee in the summer of 2013. Became a European champion the following year with Germany under-19s and ex-Eintracht and West Germany defender Karl-Heinz Korbel compares him to Mario Gotze in terms of virtuosity and set-piece work.

Elmir NABIULLIN

Defender, 20 (08.03.95)
Rubin Kazan & Russia
Russia's Young Player of the Year for 2014 was awarded his first senior cap just 12 months after making his debut for Rubin in the Russian Premier League, and the left-back is just the sort of player national boss Fabio Capello likes: disciplined, tactically smart, industrious and unassuming.



Aleksandar KOVACEVIC



Midfielder, 23 (09.01.92)
Red Star Belgrade & Serbia
Dynamic, combative under-21 defensive midfielder who is reported to be on the wish-list of a number of Bundesliga clubs. Excellent on the ball, and boasting a good range of passing and plenty of vision, German football would fit him like a glove.

Queensy MENIG

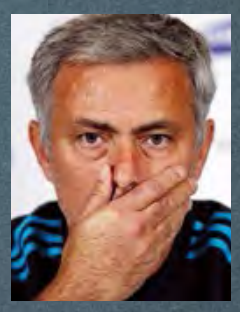
Winger, 19 (19.08.95)
Ajax & Holland
Announced himself on the senior stage with a goal on his Ajax debut last autumn in a 9-0 Dutch Cup massacre of JOS Watergraafsmeer. The opinion in Amsterdam is that he is a little too lightweight to lead the line, so he tends to be used out on the left wing, but coach Frank De Boer clearly thinks a lot of him.

Master of the DARK ARTS

WORDS: Gavin Hamilton

A second spell at Chelsea has brought success – and further controversy – for football's original control freak

In December 2005, Jose Mourinho won *World Soccer*'s World Manager of the Year award for the second year running. A presentation was arranged at Chelsea's palatial training complex in Cobham, Surrey. Photographs were taken, a short interview took place and a polite request was made by this writer to respect an embargo ahead of the



magazine's publication the following week.

"No chance," came the reply from Chelsea's chief press officer. "He'll go back to his office now and he'll be straight on the phone to his mates in Portugal."

Within hours the story was running on Portuguese websites. Another tale to boost Mourinho's reputation – and ego – at home and abroad.

Ten years on, and Mourinho is back at Chelsea and about to celebrate another Premier League title. His second-season syndrome has struck again – since guiding Porto to the Portuguese championship in 2003, he has won the league title in his second campaign with every club he has managed: Chelsea in 2005, Internazionale in 2009, Real Madrid in 2012 and, almost certainly, now Chelsea again in 2015.

Mourinho's latest success prompted him to make a proud boast in a rare one-on-one interview. "I have a problem," he told *The Daily Telegraph*, "which is I'm getting better at everything related to my job since I started.

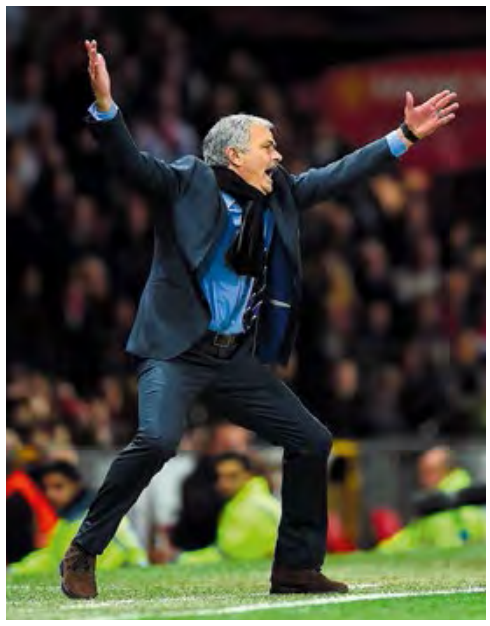
"There has been evolution in many different areas – the way I read the game; the way I prepare the game; the way I train; the methodology...I feel better and better. But there is one point where I cannot change: when I face the media, I am never a hypocrite."

So is it a case of an older, more mature Mourinho? Or has he had to adapt his dealing with the English media, so used to being spoon-fed quotes, who have finally got wise to his attempts at manipulating the media to suit his agenda?

"Some of the dynamism seems to have left him, he looks tired," says one veteran London-based European reporter who has observed both of Mourinho's spells at Chelsea. "In his first stay, there were an awful lot of one-liners at press conferences. The second time around, there has been less of that.

"We had talk of the 'Happy One' in his first press conference, but he has talked some arrogant nonsense this season, especially the stuff about a referee conspiracy."

For all the talk of Mourinho's successes down the years, it is easy to forget that his first spell as a head coach, at Benfica, was a disaster.



Animated...Mourinho on the touchline

> "I have a problem – which is getting better at everything related to my job since I started"
>
> Mourinho

He was the youngest-ever Portuguese coach of the Lisbon club when, in 2000 at the age at 37, he accepted an offer from the then club president Joao Vale e Azevedo. Mourinho had been out of work since leaving his position as assistant to Louis Van Gaal at Barcelona. His appointment was a gamble by Vale e Azevado, who was facing a presidential election challenger in Manuel Vilarinho, who was campaigning on a platform of bringing in former player Toni as coach.

Within a matter of weeks, Mourinho found himself in an untenable position when Vilarinho won the election. In Luis Lourenco's authorised biography, Mourinho cites the case of a hotel booking for an away match at Guimaraes, as an example of how strained relations with the board had become: "One of the [two] hotel buildings was better than the other, and there weren't enough rooms for everyone.

"The person responsible for the bookings had sacrificed team unity in favour of the comfort of the directors and their partners, and had unbelievably chosen to separate the players.

"I immediately told the hotel manager that we would only stay there if we could all stay together."

The directors were forced to move and although Benfica won the match 4-0 the following day, relations had deteriorated to breaking point. Matters came to a head a week later following the Lisbon derby against Sporting, the champions.

Mourinho's Benfica won 3-0 but the coach tried to use the aftermath of victory to force the issue of his short-term contract, which was due to expire at the end of the season.

"I was on the phone to my wife when Manuel Vilarinho appeared at my door," says Mourinho. "The Benfica president stood in the doorway, waiting for me to tell him to come in. I ignored him completely. I simply continued speaking to Tami until he tired of waiting and left.

"I don't know what he wanted or what he had to tell me. I only know that I regret my reaction, but I can't go back to make it right.

In his biography, Mourinho claims his wife persuaded him to tone down his claim for a new two-year deal, explaining: "I

FACT FILE

JOSE MARIO DOS SANTOS MOURINHO FELIX

AGE
52 (26.01.63)

PLACE OF BIRTH
Setubal, Portugal

PLAYING CAREER
Rio Ave 1980-82
Belenenses 1982-83
Sesimbra 1983-85

COACHING CAREER
Benfica 2000
Uniao de Leiria 2001-02
Porto 2002-04
Chelsea 2004-07
Internazionale 2008-10
Real Madrid 2010-13
Chelsea 2013-present

HONOURS
Porto
Champions League 2004
UEFA Cup 2003
Portuguese league 2003, 2004
Portuguese Cup 2003
Portuguese Super Cup 2003
Chelsea
Premier League 2005, 2006
FA Cup 2007
League Cup 2005, 2007
Community Shield 2005
Internazionale
Champions League 2010
Serie A 2009, 2010
Italian Cup 2010
Italian Super Cup 2008
Real Madrid
La Liga 2012
Spanish Cup 2011
Spanish Super Cup 2012
Chelsea
League Cup 2015

Master and pupil... with Van Gaal (left)

Success...Porto win the Champions League

admit that I used blackmail on Manuel Vilarinho. Telling him that 'either you give me a year's contract or I'll leave because another club is interested in me' is a form of blackmail. However, truth be told, the blackmail wasn't accepted."

Mourinho walked away in December 2000 after just nine games in charge. He would later dismiss the squad he worked with at Benfica, saying: "The players worked little and didn't really care.

"I didn't feel that Benfica had a squad. What it had was a 'bunch' of players who'd been signed haphazardly."

One player, Egyptian midfielder Abdel Sabry, proved particularly difficult. He had wanted to play as a number 10 but Mourinho asked him to play a more disciplined role on the left flank. Sabry was briefly given a more central opportunity in a league game against Belenenses but had lost the ball five times in 16 minutes, allowing Belenenses to counter-attack.

"A number 10 player must display a high tactical level in order to be a link between the defence and attack, but not the defence and attack of the opponent," Mourinho observed acerbically.

Although there not been another club interested in Mourinho's services, there soon would be. Uniao de Leiria were already punching above their weight in the Portuguese top flight and they identified him as the man to take them to the next level.

Away from the spotlight, Mourinho had a chance to implement his ideas on tactics and media management. Ahead of a game against Benfica, Mourinho gave an interview to the Leiria club website, in which he boasted: "With four players from Uniao de Leiria, I'd make champions out of Benfica." The match ended in a draw, and Mourinho's pre-game comments would be cited as one of the first examples of him using the media ahead of an important game, although he would later protest. He later claimed: "I had no idea those words would take on the gigantic proportions that they did. What I wanted to do was boost my players' morale, not disparage Benfica's players."

Mourinho held discussions about a possible return to Benfica halfway through his year at Leiria. But the presence of Jesualdo Ferreira as the Lisbon club's assistant coach proved too big a stumbling block. Instead, Porto president Manuel Pinto da Costa was able to consolidate a long-standing interest in hiring Mourinho.

Thoughtful...Mourinho keeps a training file

Mourinho had impressed Pinto da Costa with a powerpoint presentation of his plans. It was the first incarnation of his "bible", a document which he drew up during the summer after he left Barcelona.

According to Mourinho: "It has never been and never will be published. It's my training file, where I keep all the directives for my work. It contains the objectives and methodologies for my practice, and how to achieve these.

"If I had to give it a title, it would be 'The evolution of my training concepts'.

"In 1990 I didn't think about training the way I did in 2000. Priorities have changed over the years. I have got into the habit of taking down notes every day, be they related to training or simply my own thoughts

"It was the collection of all these notes that gave rise to the file I mentioned. After I had drawn it up, I was definitely ready to be a coach."

Difficult...Benfica's Sabry (in red)

At Porto, his blueprint for success, with two players for each position, finally came to fruition. His bold statement at his first press conference – "We'll be champions next year" – proved prophetic.

One of the lessons learned from his brief time at Benfica was the need to enter a club on his own terms. This was especially apparent at Internazionale, where Mourinho timed his arrival in 2008 to perfection.

Mourinho arrived in post-calciopoli Serie A, where Inter were the only major team not to have been affected by the crisis. Juventus were down in the dumps, so the main fault line of Italian club football – between Inter and Juventus – was not as important as it had been.

Despite 20 years of investment by Massimo Moratti, Inter were still the perennial losers – providing Mourinho with the perfect backdrop.

Mourinho's fine command of Italian was apparent from the off. In his first press conference, he responded to one question

In charge...working with Chelsea's squad

La Liga...Real players take hold of their coach after securing the title

by saying "I understand, but I'm not stupid", using the Milanese slang word "*pirla*" for stupid.

The locals laughed but many seasoned hacks were left scrambling for their dictionaries.

His histrionics on the touchline, went down well with Italian crowds who also delighted in his masterful deflection of criticism. The classic Mourinho tactic of deflecting attention away from his players was in evidence after an away victory over Catania. Inter had won thanks to a dubious penalty, but the opposition director Pietro Lo Monaco had complained of his side losing to a decision that favoured their big-name opponents.

Asked about Lo Monaco's attack, Mourinho responded: "Who the hell is Lo Monaco? I do not know who he is.

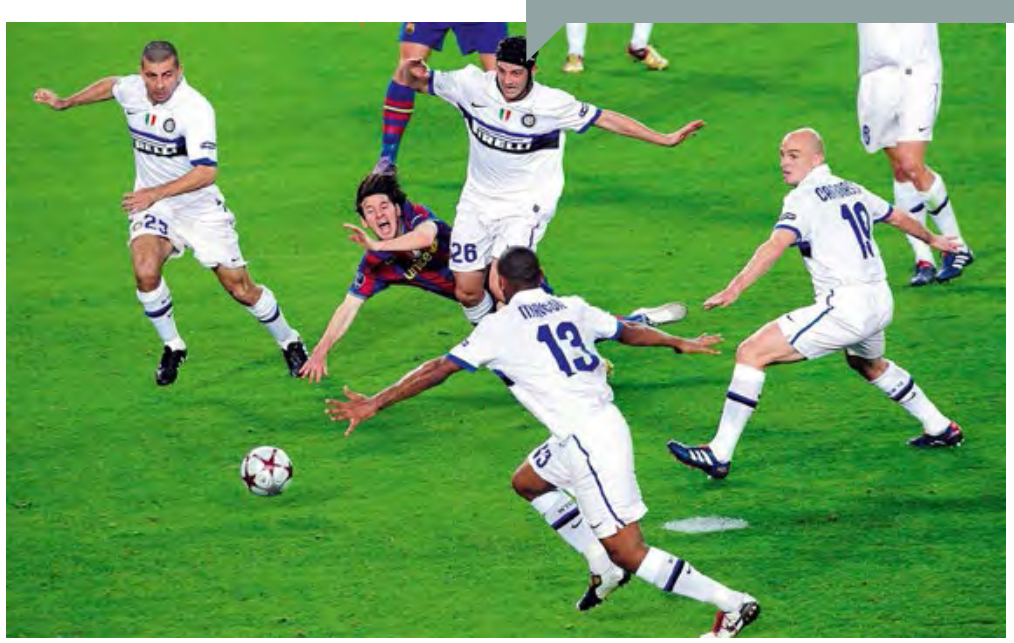
"With the name Monaco I have heard of the Monaco GP, the Tibetan Monaco ("monk") and the Principality of Monaco. I have never heard of any others."

Not even Inter's ultra-defensive tactics against Barcelona in the semi-final of the Champions League could upset Italian sensibilities. On the contrary, Mourinho delighted in saying afterwards: "They say we park the bus. That was no bus, that was an aeroplane."

After claiming his second European Cup with Inter's defeat of Van Gaal's Bayern Munich, Mourinho could rightly lay claim to once again being the world's leading coach, his stock higher than ever.

Real Madrid's hiring of Mourinho in summer 2010 had little to do with admiration for Mourinho's style and methods and everything with a pragmatic desire to secure "*la decima*" – a 10th European Cup.

> "They say we park the bus. That was no bus, that was an aeroplane"
>
> **Mourinho on his tactics against Barcelona**



Defensive...Inter frustrated Barca in their Champions League semi-final

In Spain, Mourinho encountered a media that was very different to what he had experienced in England and Italy.

Madrid won the Liga title in 2012 but European success eluded them, with Bayern Munich victorious on penalties in the semi-final. By the time, Borussia Dortmund beat Mourinho's side in the 2013 semis, they were close to surrendering the league title to Barcelona.

Mourinho lost large sections of the dressing room. Particularly damaging was the criticism from senior players Iker Casillas and Sergio Ramos, who briefed the media on a regular basis.

"The press in Spain is different to England," says Juan Castro from sports daily *Marca*. "We are used to being allowed into the training ground, we are used to speaking with the players. We may not publish interviews with the players, but we speak with them. Mourinho did not like that because he likes to control."

Mourinho expected the Barcelona media to attack him, but by the end of time the Madrid media had also turned against him.

"He expected the press to be neutral," continues Castro. "But his football was not enough to beat Barcelona. He caused a lot of damage to Spanish football with his negative attitude."

For a man who hates losing, failing to win the European Cup with Real Madrid has had a profound effect – especially as Madrid won "*la decima*" after he left.

His behaviour while in charge of Real

JOSE MOURINHO'S *circle of influence*

Pressure...Chelsea players surround the referee

Madrid – which included poking Tito Vilanova, who was then the assistant to Pep Guardiola, in the eye during the 2011 Spanish Super Cup – was a significant factor in scaring off Manchester United, who opted for the safer, but ultimately unsuccessful, guidance of David Moyes in 2013.

Instead, Mourinho has returned to Chelsea, where fans and directors alike accept that pragmatic tactics may be the price to pay for further success.

Chelsea's players were criticised for their "nasty" behaviour for pressurising the referee into sending off Zlatan Ibrahimovic in the Champions League round of 16 tie. But defeat to 10-man PSG highlighted the limitations of Mourinho's safety-first approach. His claims that Chelsea's squad may be too small appear fanciful in the light of his sanctioning the departures of Juan Mata, Romelu Lukaku and Kevin De Bruyne.

Amid the nasty atmosphere surrounding Chelsea's high-profile matches, and dubious claims of conspiracies, Mourinho has attempted to charm the public through set-piece TV interviews, rather than regular briefings with a written press that has wisened up to his histrionics.

His most high-profile interview this season was a lifestyle feature set up through a luxury car company that pays him to act as their ambassador. The older, wiser Mourinho said he was happy to be back in London, where his daughter is studying at art college.

He told the *Telegraph*: "In other places I've worked you're always walking in the middle of your club's fans. Milan: 50 per cent Inter, 50 per cent AC. Madrid: maybe 70 per cent Real, 30 per cent Atletico. In Porto, 100 per cent. If someone comes up to me, I like to listen. Although if someone wants to give me a lesson in football, of course not!

"But I think people in London understand what it is to disturb and not to disturb. They have a notion that people need space, that people deserve respect.

"If I am disturbed it is always by non-English people. The English people in the restaurant, of course they want an autograph or a selfie, but they wait until I finish my meal. Go to a shop, they wait – they don't come when I'm choosing my socks. And walking in the street I have the same feeling.

"It is impossible in London that somebody would disturb you because of a negative result when you are walking in the street with your family. Impossible! In Madrid, Milan – always."

Mourinho saviours the control he enjoys over all aspects of his life in London. And for the foreseeable future, Roman Abramovich permitting, London is the centre of his world. **WS**

> "It is impossible that somebody would disturb you because of a negative result"
>
> Mourinho on life in London

World Soccer vintage 53 years ago

May 1962

World Soccer prepares to cover its first World Cup

A rare colour action picture, featuring Dukla's Svatopluk Pluskal tackling Tadeusz Kraus of Sparta in the Prague derby, was on the front cover of the May 1962 edition as attentions turned to the forthcoming World Cup in Chile – the first to be covered by the magazine.

Eric Batty, our international correspondent, reported on the defending champions Brazil, their back-room staff, and how a new "trainer" and a Sao Paulo media mogul were the key to their chances, rather than the skills of Pele, Garrincha, Nilton Santos and Zagallo.

Vicente Feola, the architect of Brazil's triumph in 1958 had left his post just over a year previously and the little-known Aymore Moreira had been given the chance to step up and fill his boots.

The Brazilian Federation, the CBD, had set up a panel of football excellence with the aim of leaving no stone unturned in the pursuit of glory, but Batty doubted just how much influence Moreira himself would have.

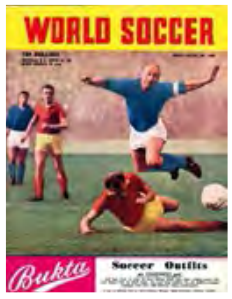
"The technical commission set up by the CBD to see that Brazil retain the World Cup bristles with star names including Feola, reinstated as 'master spy', and Lula [trainer of Santos] who serves in an advisory capacity," wrote Batty. "Though the set-up is difficult to fathom, it seems clear that Moreira is not going to be completely responsible for planning the campaign.

"In addition to Moreira, Feola and Lula, there is a physical-training expert and a psychiatrist whose job it is to decide which of the players are least patriotic or lacking in confidence. Each of these men will have some say in who plays where, when and how. But the last word will almost certainly fall to Dr Paulo Machado de Carvalho, a Sao Paulo businessman who owns and directs a chain of radio and TV stations."

Batty added: "Feola wants to retain all or most of the 1958 team. Lula understandably has a great deal of support for his claim that the entire Santos attack, plus Zito and Gilmar, should be included, while Moreira wants to rejuvenate the side. Dr Carvalho's job appears to be to see that no one gets his own way.

"There must not be too many players from Santos or Botafogo; neither Rio de Janeiro nor Sao Paulo will be allowed predominance and there must not be too many 'coloured' players in the team.

"The result might be a hotchpotch but, as long as the defence is strong and well organised, the brilliance of Pele, Zito, Garrincha, Didi and Coutinho should carry Brazil over the obstacles." WS



Poster...the World Cup in South America

TWENTY-EIGHT — WORLD SOCCER, May, 1962

KEY MEN IN THE WORLD CUP
- Dr. Paulo Machado de Carvalho (Brazil)
- Rudolf Vytlacil (Czechoslovakia)
- Mikhail Donski (Bulgaria)
- Donald Ross (Mexico)
- Juan Carlos Corazzo (Uruguay)
- Ljubomir Lovric (Yugoslavia)

Brazil appear winners

Concluding phase of ERIC BATTY'S

WHEN Vicente Feola gave up his post as trainer to the Brazilian national team a little more than a year ago there was no natural successor ready to fill the gap. Flavio Costa was perhaps the most popular candidate though the CBD were unimpressed by his handling of their party in the 1954 World Cup series in Switzerland, and finally the field was narrowed to "unknown" Aymore Moreira.

Since Moreira took over his duties, the Brazilians have been in action only rarely and to date there has been little or no opportunity to assess his abilities even assuming that he has full control. This is to be doubted, though no official spokesman has ever said as much, for the technical commission set up by the CBD to see that Brazil retain the World Cup bristles with star names including Feola, reinstated as "master spy", and Lula (trainer of Santos FC) who serves in an advisory capacity.

Difficult

Though the set-up is difficult to fathom it seems clear that Moreira is not going to be completely responsible for planning the campaign. In addition to Moreira, Feola and Lula, there is a physical training expert in the commission and a psychiatrist whose job it is to decide which of the players are the least patriotic or lacking in confidence! Each of these men will have some say in who plays, where, when, and how. But the last word will almost certainly fall to Dr. Paulo Machado de Carvalho, who was in charge of the 1958 party and will again be the boss in Chile.

Dr. Carvalho is a Sao Paulo businessman who owns and directs a chain of radio and TV stations. His main task will be to preserve order on the commission, restraining the various factions from open war and using his business sense to arrive at decisions diplomatically. Moreira is the trainer, nominally at least, and for him it is without doubt the biggest job he has ever had. A former goalkeeper with Botafogo, he gained many representative honours in his playing days despite being considerably shorter in height than was thought desirable. Since giving up the active side of the game, Moreira has been with various clubs in Sao Paulo, without gaining distinction. His most recent club, Taubate, improved considerably under his guidance and though lacking money and star players have held a middle-of-the-table position in the Sao Paulo Premier Division—largely because of their fine defensive record. This perhaps is Moreira's greatest single attribute and the reason behind his appointment.

Disagreement

Moreira has been placed on record as being against the 4-2-4 system, and less than a year ago he had a heated disagreement with Bellini, the centre-half and captain of the 1958 World Cup squad over defensive tactics. Bellini left out of the O'Higgins Cup matches against Chile, is now back in favour apparently which means one of two things—either Bellini has backed down or Moreira has been over-ruled!

With such an unwieldy and top heavy set-up it seems certain that mistakes will be made in the Brazilian camp, but with a host of talented stars at their disposal the effects of the mistakes will be minimised. Feola wants to retain all or most of the 1958 team. Lula understandably has a great deal of support for his claim that the entire Santos attack plus Zito and Gilmar should be included, while Moreira wants to rejuvenate the side.

Absolutely

Over all presides Dr. Carvalho, whose job appears to be to see that no one gets his own way absolutely. There must not be too many players from Santos or Botafogo; neither Rio de Janeiro nor Sao Paulo will be allowed predominance and there must not be too many coloured players in the team! The result might well be a "hotch potch" but as long as the defence is strong and well organised the brilliance of Pele, Zito, Garrincha, Didi and Coutinho should carry "Brasil" over the obstacles.

Trainer of the Czech team for Chile is Rudolf Vytlacil who by comparison with Moreira has an easy task. Forty-nine-years-old Vytlacil has to deal with his players and the F.A.'s technical director, Dr. Vaclav Jira, and chief of the National Trainers' Committee. Between them they decide the policy, choose the team and draw up the tactical plans and Vytlacil's job is to put the ideas into practice. Formerly an outside-left of some repute, Rudolf Vytlacil was born in Vienna and played for SC Rapid before joining Slavia SK (now Dinamo Prague). Capped by Austria and Czechoslovakia, he retired in 1945 and spent the first two years after the war coaching in Poland before returning to Prague.

Hammered

After the 1958 World Cup flop in Sweden, where the Czechs hammered Argentina 6-1 but were eliminated by the more direct Northern Ireland team, Karel Kolsky resigned and Vytlacil took over. Since then there has been a distinct improvement in Czech football fortunes. Yet while the defence has usually proved reliable it is only in the last twelve months or so that the forwards have been able to score goals away from home.

Tactically Vytlacil is a 4-2-4 convert—the two being left-half Masopust (Dukla) and centre-forward Kvasniak (Spartak Prague)—though in common with all the central Europeans he retains the twin maxims individual technique and team work. Painstaking and thorough in his approach Vytlacil's problems revolve around the Czechs' ingrained love of short passing to the exclusion of nearly all else. For though their football is clever and attractive their moves are built up more slowly than, for example, Brazil and Spain, who will provide the first test in Chile.

Vytlacil's responsibilities to the Czech F.A. are two-fold. At the national level he is the chief coach organising their nationwide campaign to raise the general level of play under the direction of Dr. Jira. "Technique,

One of the world's finest footballers, the Brazilian inside-forward Didi (shown above), is looking forward to the World Cup finals in Chile. Now in his early thirties, this will certainly be his last appearance in this competition, but should be all the more memorable for that reason. (Central 1.)

> "There is a psychiatrist who decides which of the players are the least patriotic"
>
> Eric Batty on Brazil's World Cup preparations

Eventual winners...Brazil line up at the 1962 World Cup in Chile

exclusive survey

basic skill with the ball, is the first step to good football," he told me in Prague last year, "without it the most effective physical preparation is of little use.

"Secondly we look for ideas in the young players, the position he takes up when not in possession and the use he makes of the ball when he receives it!"

The same basic thinking is reflected in the Czech national team for Chile with the emphasis on hard working and highly skilled ball players. It is a team in the fullest sense, lacking spectacular stars yet carefully blended so that each player complements his colleagues who play around him.

Improving

During the last five or six years Bulgarian football has been steadily improving, thanks largely to the predominance of their top club CDNA, who have usually provided seven or eight players for the national team. When the World Cup qualifying draw placed them against France and Finland, Bulgarian officials were more than optimistic about their chances, for the 3-0 defeat they suffered against France in Paris at the end of 1960 not only jarred their pride but sparked off a major row within the F.A. and brought about a drastic administrative reorganisation. Previously forty-years-old Stojan Ormandjiev (a former international player) had been responsible for team selection with CDNA trainer Krum Milev acting as coach. Charged with favouring the ageing stars of the Army club they were demoted to a seat on a six-man executive panel. Their new colleagues of six months' standing are Messrs. Chakarov and Patchedjiev, jointly responsible for training; the most likely sole trainer of the future, former CDNA wing-half and sixty times capped Dr. Stefan Bojkov, and the F.A.'s own vice-president, Mikhail Donski.

Mr. Donski's role will surely be similar to that of the Brazilian Dr. Carvalho, to listen to the various arguments put forward by his panel of experts, and then by every means at his disposal to force agreement and action from the committee. Such an arrangement can hardly bring the best out of Bulgarian football for any decisions must be based on compromise, yet the majority of people in Sofia will not be disappointed if their team fails to do well in Chile.

Delighted

Highly delighted at gaining a place among the sixteen best teams in the world, Bulgarians will, I believe, realise before long that to entrust management of their side to one man is a good move, and that that man will be best advised to use the country's outstanding club side as the basis for his national team. Block selection has brought dividends to Bulgaria in the past, and also to a great many others. If Ormandjiev and Milev erred it was in allowing two of the key men, centre-back Manolov and withdrawn centre-forward Panayotov, to hold their places too long without introducing younger players to the international sphere.

In terms of skill the Bulgarians have several fine players with inside-left Ivan Kolev particularly outstanding. Their experience, however, is strictly limited and though this will be a disadvantage in Chile they also lack a well balanced team plan. According to a Central European critic with whom I spoke recently and who saw the Bulgarians' recent 1-0 victories over France, they play "Hurrah" football. In both matches, the entire Bulgarian team moved to attack whenever they gained possession ... until they had scored! From then on it was everyone back in the penalty area to defend.

Of course it may be that their customary approach was abandoned in view of the urgency of the situation—but it should be clear that such tactics will not take them beyond the preliminary round in Chile.

Control of the Mexican World Cup squad has also changed hands following the Central Americans' unconvincing performance in Europe last spring. In all probability the decisive match was the 8-0 defeat suffered against England at Wembley when the tourists made a tragic start and steadily became even worse. The man in charge, Ignacio Trellez, took the can back for wisely trying to blood young Mota to take over from the ageing goalkeeper star, eighty times capped Antonio Carbajal—but choosing the wrong match for it! Mota, who knocked a Hitchens shot in the first minute into his own goal—wrecked the confidence of his entire defence and when the party returned to Mexico City Señor Trellez was replaced by two Uruguayans, Alejandro Scopelli and Donald Ross.

Under the new arrangement Scopelli will be the technical director and Ross the trainer. Scopelli was, and still is, the director of the Mexican F.A.'s coaching school, a theorist and tactician, while Ross is a lively and forceful advocate of direct attacking football based on super fitness.

Ross has a fine record in South American football though his experience of the European game is strictly limited. Formerly with the Millonarios F.C. of Bogota, he moved to Mexico to take over Guadalajara F.C. and since he joined them they have carried off the championship four times in succession!

At Scopelli's insistence Mexico will abandon 4-2-4 in favour of 4-3-3 so as to reinforce the defence. This step has been taken be-

Continued on page 32

The 1961 Brazilian champions Botafogo defeated Santos from Sao Paulo 3-0 at the Maracana Stadium in Rio. Amarildo scored two of the goals but the chief architect of the victory, outside-right Garrincha is carried off shoulder high by his team mates. (Keystone 1.)

Also in this issue...

p30 Under the headline "These Czechs could spring Chile surprise", Roger MacDonald says: "The tide of Czechoslovakian football ebbs and flows. Olympic finalists in 1920, they lose in the first round four years later. World Cup finalists in 1934, they have never promised to repeat this performance. Sensational conquerors of Hungary at Budapest in 1956, they lose to little [Northern] Ireland in Sweden [in the 1958 World Cup]. But the tide flows in once more, and the Czechs are back among the strongest nations in Europe. They hope to reach a new high water mark in Chile."

THESE CZECHS COULD SPRING CHILE SURPRISE

p14 MacDonald also assessed how the altitude in Chile may prove a decisive factor, commenting: "Santiago stands at 1,703 feet above sea level, while Rancagua is another 200 feet nearer the sky. It is at these two centres that the problem of 'thin' air is to be found. Some critics maintain the high altitude is unimportant. My own impression is that Chile's experience of her own climate might sway a close game in her favour."

HOME ADVANTAGE A DECIDING FACTOR

p19 The great Ferenc Puskas who played in the 1954 Final for Hungary had claimed dual nationality in Spain, where he was playing for Real Madrid. He is featured in a player portrait, and although he would only play four games in total for Spain, three of them came at the 1962 World Cup, albeit without any success.

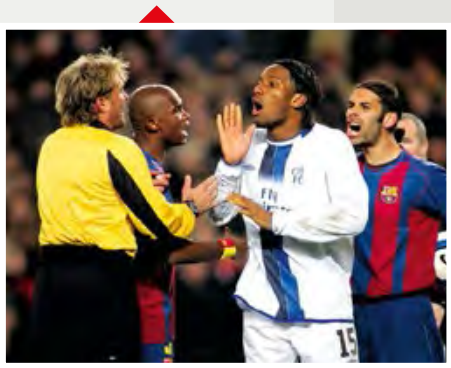
FERENC PUSKAS—BUY OF THIS CENTURY

p12 Wilfred Schumacher wrote about a West German hero who was forcing his way into the thoughts of trainer Sepp Herberger after a two-year absence from international football. He noted: "One name has again been on the lips of German fans – Helmut Rahn. The 'hero of Berne', who in 1954 scored the second and the famous third goal which gave Germany their 3-2 win over Hungary in the Final. A man who with his devilish quick dribbling and his dynamite hammer in both feet can win a game on his own." Rahn, however, didn't quite do enough to make the eventual squad.

MAN WITH THE 'GO(A)LDEN' FEET

10 years ago

Swedish referee Anders Frisk says he "won't ever go out on a football pitch again" after he admits to being scared following death threats made to him and his family in the wake of the Champions League semi-final between Chelsea and Barcelona.



20 years ago

With Barca coach Johan Cruyff under fire as the club's form dips, Graham Turner suggests the Dutch legend is in the middle of a cold war with Bulgarian star Hristo Stoichkov, and how Cruyff's son, Jordi, was jeered by "50,000 voices every time he entered or left the field".

30 years ago

Uruguay become the first nation to qualify for the 1986 World Cup finals in Mexico with a 2-1 victory over Chile in Montevideo. Uruguay, who had missed the last two tournaments, include a young playmaker in their side called Enzo Francescoli.

40 years ago

Following an impressive debut, Rob Hughes suggests Alan Hudson could be the player England build a team around, as he "has the ability to recover dimensions of vision and surprise which his nation has lacked since Bobby Charlton's day". Hudson won just one further cap.

50 years ago

Nandor Hidegkuti, who scored a hat-trick when his country beat England 6-3 at Wembley, took Hungarian champions Vasas Gyor to the semi-finals of the European Cup where they would play Benfica, the club who tried to appoint him two years earlier to replace Fernando Riera.

Facetoface

BROWN IDEYE

"If you come out of Ajegunle alive to achieve fame, then you are a living proof there is a God after all"

West Bromwich Albion's Nigerian striker has risen from a poverty-stricken Lagos neighbourhood to the riches of the Premier League

Ajegunle is a ghetto in the heart of Lagos, the most populous city in Nigeria. What was life like there?
Growing up in Ajegunle was rough and tough because you are exposed to dangerous things at a young age, but I have a mother who kept me grounded. I would probably have ended up in jail with gangs or have my life cut short by following criminal gangs. Such beginnings gave me a mental toughness to stare challenges in the eyes today. Maybe I was lucky, but I think it was just by the grace of God.

You paint a dark picture. How did you get the motivation to lead the right path?
A poor background was the perfect motivation. I lost my dad when I was 13 and I could have easily lost my way. I wanted to do music and hopefully become a famous dancehall artist, but the people doing that were tough guys and it was an easy route to a dangerous end. My mother noticed and always prevented me from mixing with them.

When did you realise that your future was in football and not crime or music?
You have limited options to choose from: you could either go to school, try to do dancehall music, dream of becoming a footballer or simply turn to crime for survival. If you come out of Ajegunle alive to achieve fame, then you are a living proof there is a God after all. I had all these options but, knowing some made it by doing sport, I realised at the age of 15 that football was my only escape and God guided me all the way.

How did you start?
I joined a local side known as AJ Leicester in Olodi Apapa and was paid one thousand naira [about US $8] a month by the owner and it gave me the signs that football could take me out of the ghetto. But my mother wasn't comfortable with the idea of being a footballer, she had fears I would end up with the street gangs. I was resolute and once I left Lagos for Bayelsa to join Ocean Boys in 2006, my life took a positive curve and I ended up playing for Nigeria at the 2007 Under-20 World Cup.

You played in Europe for Neuchatel Xamax in Switzerland, French side Sochaux, Ukraine's Dynamo Kiev and ended up as an international...
When I earned a move to Europe I cried. I was living a dream some people never get to witness. I lost my father in 2001 and some friends also died along the way. I told myself this is my ticket out of a dark past into light. From earning around $8 to six figures, I was able to give my family a decent place to sleep. I made the 2010 World Cup squad and won the 2013 African Nations Cup with Nigeria. I was simply where I want to be.

And in the summer of 2014 you joined West Brom for a club record £10million...
I always wanted to come to the Premier League from the moment I moved to Europe. It was a dream league while playing in Nigeria, watching the likes of [Nwankwo] Kanu and [Jay-Jay] Okocha playing in England. You keep saying someday it will happen. I went to the hotel and said to myself that I am now in the big league.

You endured a tough start to life at the Hawthorns, insulted by fans, labelled waste of money...
It is always hard to settle down into a new club, adapt with the system of play and get to know everyone. I did not do pre-season with the club, suffered visa delays coupled with injury problems. I was dealing with vile insults on Twitter and Instagram. I'd go home every day, sit on my little couch looking to the ceiling and wishing all the predicament wasn't for me. Sometimes God has to test you to see if you really have faith in him. Even when things weren't going well I kept the faith.

With just two goals in your first 17 games, you can probably understand the anger and lack of patience. How close were you to a reported deadline-day move to Qatar?
I know fans are impatient, I also put a pressure on myself to perform, but the news of me leaving for Qatar was nonsense. There is no way I was leaving England and moving to the Middle East.

On transfer deadline day it was big news. They say there is no smoke without fire...
That was only false smoke. Al Gharafa tried to sign me before, when I was in Ukraine. They approached West Brom again around December and I told the director to forget it as I plan to stay and fight for my place because England is where I want to be.

And what a fantastic turnaround it was for you, with four goals in three games in the middle of February...
I always believe in hard work. When you work hard it might take time but your time will come. I knew things would turn out well if I remain patient and God did for me like he does in my life. Even when things weren't going well with me, the players stood by me and the manager [Tony Pulis] has been helpful since he got here. He has been like a father.

You played a big role as Nigeria won the Nations Cup but were left out of the 2014 World Cup squad. Are you still bitter?
I felt bad when I was omitted because playing at the World Cup is every player's dream. But I've put all that behind me. I need to stay positive and look ahead.

Interview by Oluwashina Okeleji

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"I had many super years with Germany but I wanted to make sure I continued to play to my maximum in my last four years with Bayern"

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PHILIPP LAHM

"Where else could you get this complete package? Everyone would love to sign a long contract here"

Four months out injured gave Bayern Munich's captain the opportunity to take a different view of his club and team-mates

You were out of action after fracturing your right ankle. Did you watch Bayern games during that time through the eyes of a fan or a coach?
It's a mix of everything. You can be thrilled like a fan and at the same time you can share the coach's perspective because I know how Pep Guardiola thinks. I reflect on what we can do better. Compared to pitch level, you see situations differently from the outside. You see the whole field, the open spaces.

What did you make of Bayern's form during your absence?
Very positive. It's been good to take a step back and have a look at the team. You can enjoy it. We're playing very good, attractive football. As for the problems we had in Wolfsburg [where Bayern lost 4-1 in January], they have been taken care of.

Preventing goals on the counter has been a big issue. How do you fix this problem?
Basically there's no problem here. It's just a matter of how the team and the individual players react after losing the ball. The way we defend, by looking to win back the ball as quickly as possible, can leave us vulnerable if we don't do it correctly.

Could this style of play be too much of a risk in big games?
If everybody does their job, we will not give up many scoring opportunities and we will always be in the opposition half. When we get it right, it's hard to live with us. We put the other side under pressure and make it difficult for them to find solutions.

Can Bayern play a midfield of experienced campaigners such as Xabi Alonso, Bastian Schweinsteiger and yourself?
Never say never, but I find it difficult to imagine such a midfield. The game has changed. Full-backs, midfielders and attacking wide men are all, by and large, similar types of player. Even if the strength of Arjen Robben or Franck Ribery is in one-on-ones, everyone is technically accomplished. We still have the centre-backs and the strikers, but as for the rest, they tend to be very similar: all rather small technical guys with good passing ability.

With the full-backs heavily engaged at Bayern, does it make any difference if you play at right-back or in midfield?
It depends. As a full-back today I spend more time in midfield when we're in possession. Defensively it's a bigger difference.

Is the development of players who largely resemble one another a step forward or a counter-productive phenomenon that results in players losing their individuality?
It's a big advantage because it means more options. We still have the individualists; if not, we wouldn't have Robben and Ribery in the team. This type of player, who dribble and make the difference, will continue to be very important. But it's also necessary to have players who are tactically switched on.

Guardiola stands for permanent change in personnel, systems and positions. Is there a danger that in a big game the team is not 100 per cent rehearsed and ready?
No, because we work on such things every day. Everybody knows what we must do as a team.

You are part of an exceptional squad, but bearing in mind the ages of some of the players, Guardiola's Bayern don't have long to win the Champions League again...
I think we've at least two years left at the absolute top level.

Would Guardiola be prepared to wait a long time for another European title?
I don't know. He has a contract until 2016. I don't think he'll be going soon. I hope he stays with us beyond 2016. But his way of working is very intense. The club and everyone here is completely satisfied with him, without question.

You have had a remarkable career. How long do you want to go on?
Up to 2018. My contract runs out that year. I'll be 34 and it definitely will be the end.

You retired from international football after the World Cup triumph in Brazil. Were you no longer able to put up with the continuous pressure?
Not at all. Everything, at some point or another, comes to end. I had many super years with Germany but I wanted to be sure I continued to play to my maximum in my last four years with Bayern. With national team games, it would have become too much. In the last nine years I was never injured and as captain of club and country that took up a lot of energy.

Both homegrown players like yourself and overseas stars such as Ribery and Robben clearly identify with Bayern. Is this one of the reasons for the team's strength?
Where else would you go? We play for a top European side, who each year compete for the Bundesliga title and the Champions League. Where else could you get this complete package? Then there's the specific nature of the club: the family-like aspect, the pride, the modern organisation with tradition. Everyone would love to sign a long contract here.

Would an extrovert superstar such as Zlatan Ibrahimovic fit in at Bayern?
Irrespective of their names, we could absorb a character like Ibrahimovic.

It always used to be said Bayern must sign two or three top-quality players every year. Does that still apply?
Maybe so, but at the moment I don't see the need.

Interview by Karl-Heinz Wild/ESM

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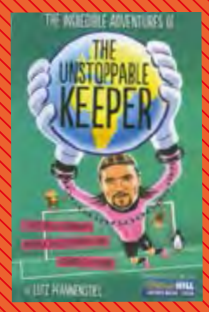

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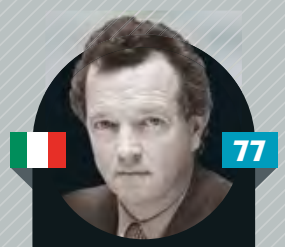

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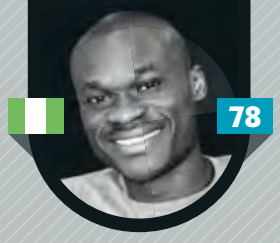

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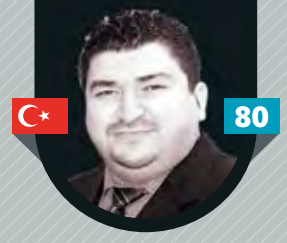

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MARCH 20-APRIL 15, 2015

Global diary

A comprehensive record of recent events around the world

Switch..Arsenal Tula (left) and CSKA Moscow

Friday *March 20*

AUSTRALIA: Sydney lose for the first time this year and are denied top spot as James Brown's goal gives visitors Melbourne City a 1-0 win.
FRANCE: A Zlatan Ibrahimovic hat-trick takes his total to 17 goals in 21 league games this season as Paris Saint-Germain beat Lorient 3-1 and go top of the table.
SPAIN: Paco Alcacer responds to being left out of the national squad earlier in the day by scoring in a 4-0 thrashing of Elche that puts Valencia within five points of La Liga leaders Barcelona.

Saturday *March 21*

ENGLAND: Harry Kane celebrates his call-up to the England squad with a first Premier League hat-trick as Tottenham Hotspur beat bottom club Leicester City 4-3. West Bromwich Albion lose 3-0 at Manchester City and have defender Gareth McAuley sent off after 89 seconds – although it is a case of mistaken identity as it is Craig Dawson who commits the foul. Referee Neil Swarbrick owns up to his mistake at half-time.
FRANCE: Without suspended striker Alexandre Lacazette, Lyon lose 2-1 at home to Nice, who have Lloyd Palun sent off just before the hour mark.
GERMANY: Borussia Dortmund and Bayer Leverkusen bounce back from midweek Champions League defeats with wins over Hanover (3-2) and Schalke (1-0) respectively. Freiburg climb out of the bottom three with a 2-0 victory at home to Augsburg. Stuttgart remain bottom despite beating Eintracht Frankfurt 3-1.
RUSSIA: Defending champions CSKA Moscow close the gap on league leaders Zenit to two points with a 4-1 win at Arsenal Tula in a game switched to the synthetic pitch of Lokomotiv Moscow's reserve arena due to the poor quality of Tula's pitch. Spartak Moscow beat city rivals Torpedo 1-0.
SPAIN: Fernando Torres scores his first Liga goal since 2007 as Atletico Madrid beat Getafe 2-0.

Sunday *March 22*

ARGENTINA: League leaders Rosario Central drop their first points of the season as they are held 1-1 by bottom side Atletico Rafaela.
BELGIUM: Lior Refaelov scores in injury time to give Club Brugge their first silverware for eight years with a 2-1 victory over Anderlecht in the Belgian Cup Final.
ENGLAND: Steven Gerrard is sent off 38 seconds after appearing as a substitute as Liverpool lose 2-1 at home to Manchester United. Juan Mata scores both United goals.
GERMANY: Bayern Munich lose at home for the first time in 11 months, going down 2-0 to Borussia Monchengladbach.
HOLLAND: Ajax cut PSV's lead to eight points with a 1-0 win over Den Haag as the league leaders lose 2-1 at Feyenoord.
ITALY: Genoa goalkeeper Eugenio Lamanna makes his second sub appearance of the season – and saves a penalty for the second time. Although he denies Carlos Tevez, the Argentinian still scores the only goal of the game in Juventus's 1-0 win.
JAPAN: Defending J.League champions Gamba Osaka get their first win of the new league campaign at the third time of asking, with a 2-0 win at Ventforet Kofu.
NIGERIA: A 1-0 victory over Senegal in the Final gives Nigeria a seventh CAF Under-20 title. The two finalists will be joined by losing semi-finalists Ghana and Mali in this summer's Under-20 World Cup.
SCOTLAND: Hibernian lose 2-0 at home to Rangers, handing the second-tier title and automatic promotion to Edinburgh rivals Hearts.
SPAIN: Luis Suarez scores the winner as Barcelona beat Real Madrid 2-1 at Camp Nou after Cristiano Ronaldo cancels out Jeremy Mathieu's opener for the hosts. Cordoba have three players sent off as they lose 3-1 to Real Sociedad.
TAHITI: Tefana, who lost 3-1 to Pirae

Local hero...Suarez celebrates his winner for Barcelona against Real Madrid at Camp Nou

Beaten...PSV (in blue) lose at Feyenoord

in the Final of the Tahiti Cup days earlier, gain revenge with a 2-2 draw against defending champions Pirae in the last league game of the season to win the title for a fourth time.
TURKEY: Fenerbahce beat Istanbul rivals Besiktas 1-0 with an injury-time winner from Moussa Sow to leave Galatasaray, who beat Kasimpasa 3-2 on Saturday, top of the league.

Monday *March 23*

IRAQ: Mahdi Abdul Zahra, a 19-year-old defender with Al Kahraba who was part of the national under-23 squad hoping to qualify for the 2016 Olympics, dies in a car-bomb attack in Habibiya, eastern Baghdad.
NICARAGUA: A 5-0 World Cup qualifying win over Anguilla gives Nicaragua their biggest-ever victory and ends a 10-game winless run, stretching back to February 2012.
PORTUGAL: National coach Fernando Santos has an eight-match suspension reduced to four games, with two suspended, after appealing to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. He had been found guilty of unsporting conduct towards a match official at last summer's World Cup when he was in charge of Greece.

Tuesday *March 24*

SPAIN: Diego Simeone signs a contract extension to remain as coach of Atletico Madrid until 2020.
UEFA: Michel Platini is unopposed and re-elected as UEFA president for a third four-year term. David Gill wins UEFA's vote to be Britain's next FIFA vice-president and former Croatia striker Davor Suker is elected to UEFA's executive committee.

Wednesday *March 25*

AUSTRALIA: Western Sydney Wanderers move off the foot of the table with a 4-1 win at defending champions Brisbane Roar. An 81st-minute Lukas Podolski equaliser denies the national side victory away to world champions Germany after ➤

Italy

PADDY AGNEW

Family ties...Berlusconi, with daughter Barbara, may wait until after the regional elections before deciding to sell

Is Berlusconi preparing to sell Milan?

Far East businessmen look set to invest in the *Rossoneri*

Is it possible that media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi could be getting ready to sell a majority shareholding in his much-loved Milan? Recent reports in the Italian media have suggested that at least two people, Thai financier Bee Taechaubol and Hong Kong businessman Richard Lee, have been in contact with Berlusconi with a view to buying the club.

At this stage, it would appear that Taechaubol represents the most serious offer on the table. He has reportedly already concluded a preliminary agreement dependent on the conclusion of a "due diligence" assessment of the Milan books, with the club expected to return a 2014 annual deficit of approximately €60million.

While the asking price remains difficult to calculate, *Gazzetta Dello Sport* reported that Taechaubol has offered €500m for a 60 per cent shareholding. Given that other interested parties, including Lee, could become involved in an "auction" for Milan, it seems certain that negotiations will prove lengthy.

On top of that, there is the consideration that Berlusconi – who is the leader of his own centre-right party, Forza Italia – is expected to be much involved in Italian regional elections this spring. It could be that he will wait until after the May elections before finally agreeing to sell the club, given the potentially negative electoral impact of his withdrawal from Italian football.

For example, the €20m transfer of Mario Balotelli from Manchester City to Milan in January 2013 was calculated to be worth around 400,000 votes for Berlusconi's coalition. That purchase was made weeks before Italy went to the polls in a March 2013 General Election. In is always worth remembering that being a football "winner" has greatly helped plug Berlusconi into the psyche of the "*popolo*".

> "I do not deny the interest for a possible share acquisition into such a prestigious club such as AC Milan, but at the moment it's only cordial and private discussions with representatives from the AC Milan group"
> Bee Taechaubol's comment to the Italian media in February

If he listens to those advisors who urge him to sell, it would represent a remarkable one-two, coming two years after Indonesian businessman Erick Thohir bought a 70 per cent stake in Internazionale for €250m.

Italian football, it would seem, is ever more on the international market, looking for badly needed investors. WS

➤ James Troisi and Mile Jedinak had given the visitors a 2-1 lead.
DENMARK: Nicklas Bendtner scores his first international hat-trick, including the winner in injury time, as Denmark beat USA 3-2.
MAURITIUS: New national coach Didier Six is denied a victory on his debut as Burundi twice come from behind in a 2-2 draw.
SOUTH AFRICA: Thabo Mnyamane, on his debut, and Thulani Hlatshwayo, in his first game as skipper, score in a 3-1 friendly victory away to neighbours Swaziland.
USA: MLS announce that Minnesota United will join the league in 2018.

Thursday *March 26*

BARBADOS: Having lost 1-0 at home to the US Virgin Islands in the first leg, Barbados cruise to a 4-0 victory over the minnows in the return to reach the second stage of the regional World Cup qualifiers, where they will now face Aruba.
BRAZIL: Oscar, Neymar and Luiz Gustavo are on target as the national side come from behind to beat France 3-1 in Paris after Raphael Varane gives *Les Bleus* the lead.
EGYPT: Hector Cuper makes a winning start to life as coach of Egypt as goals from Bassem Morsi and Mahmoud "Trezeguet" Hassan secure a 2-0 victory over Equatorial Guinea in Cairo.

Friday *March 27*

ENGLAND: Three touches and 79 seconds into his international debut, substitute Harry Kane scores his first goal for England, in a 4-0 victory over Lithuania at Wembley.
ESTONIA: Ragnar Klavan makes his 100th appearance for his country as Estonia lose 3-0 away to Switzerland.
JAPAN: Second-half substitutes Shinji Okazaki and Keisuke Honda give new coach Vahid Halilhodzic a winning start with the goals in a 2-0 victory over Tunisia.
MONTENEGRO: The Euro qualifier against Russia in Podgorica is abandoned after a second-half brawl involving players and coaching staff. The game had been suspended for 35 minutes in the first half after the visitors' goalkeeper, Igor Akinfeev, was hit on the back of the head by a flare and had to be stretchered off.
SLOVAKIA: A 3-0 win at home to Luxembourg sees Slovakia maintain their 100 per cent record in qualifying for Euro 2016 – a feat that is matched only by England.
SLOVENIA: The hosts set a new national record with their biggest-ever win, beating San Marino 6-0.
SPAIN: *La Roja* maintain their record of not having lost a competitive home game since June 2003 with a 1-0 Euro qualifying win over Ukraine. Alvaro Morata scores the winning goal in Seville.

Saturday *March 28*

BOSNIA: Eden Dzeko scores a hat-trick as Bosnia collect their first win of the Euro qualifying campaign with a 3-0 victory over Andorra.
CHILE: Universidad de Concepcion beat Palestino 3-2 in the Chilean Cup Final.
HOLLAND: An injury-time equaliser from Wesley Sneijder earns Holland a 1-1 draw at home to Turkey after Burak Yilmaz put the visitors ahead.
ICELAND: Eidur Gudjohnsen comes out of international retirement and scores in Iceland's 3-0 win away to Kazakhstan. At 39 years and 270 days old, Gudjohnsen becomes the fourth-oldest scorer in European qualifying history.
ITALY: Eder marks his international debut with the equaliser in Italy's 2-2 draw in Bulgaria, after Ivelin Popov and Iliyan Mitsanski cancel out Iordan Minev's early own goal.
NORWAY: At 16 years and 101 days, Martin Odegaard becomes the youngest European to start a competitive international, as Norway lose 5-1 to Croatia.
SENEGAL: Second-half substitute Moussa Konate scores twice in 11 minutes as Senegal beat Ghana 2-1 to give new coach Aliou Cisse a victorious start.
WALES: Gareth Bale scores twice, in addition to setting up Aaron Ramsey's equaliser, as Wales win 3-0 in Israel to end their hosts' 100 per cent record. Bale is now Wales' all-time top scorer in Euro qualifying, with eight goals.

Sunday *March 29*

ARGENTINA: San Lorenzo go top of the league with a 4-0 win at home to Lanus despite having Matias Caruzzo sent off just before half-time.
BRAZIL: Dunga extends his record in his second spell as national coach to eight wins in eight games as sub Roberto Firmino secures a 1-0 victory over Chile in London. The under-17s win the South American Championship and qualify for the World Cup finals, along with Argentina, Ecuador and Paraguay.
SCOTLAND: Steven Fletcher becomes the first man to score a hat-trick for Scotland at senior international level for 45 years with a treble in a 6-1 win over Gibraltar.
SLOVAKIA: Marek Hamsik is voted Slovakian player of the year for a fourth time, equalling Martin ➤

Unhappy...Keshi described his offer as "slave contract"

NIGERIA

OLUWASHINA OKELEJI

Super Eagles still lack leadership

Nigeria keen to move on but Keshi lurks in the shadows

The 2017 African Nations Cup qualifiers may begin in June, with the World Cup qualifying campaign starting after that, but Nigeria are still no nearer resolving their coaching situation.

With the country going through a period of soul-searching following the failure of the "Super Eagles" to qualify for the Nations Cup in Equatorial Guinea earlier this year, negotiations with Stephen Keshi to resume his role continue.

Keshi was first appointed in November 2011 and led the team to the Nations Cup title in 2013, and the second round at the World Cup last summer, before his contract with the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) ran out after the tournament in Brazil.

Continuing as caretaker, Keshi endured a turbulent 2014, in which he was sacked by the NFF in October, only to be reinstated two weeks later. Debate now rages over whether the 53-year-old should be given a new contract despite the African Nations Cup debacle.

Nigeria's football authority wants to move on and appoint a foreigner as national coach, but the man affectionately known as "the Big Boss" has made a lot of friends in government and it is proving extremely difficult to get the backing to let him go.

At the end of February, Keshi was offered a two-year contract that set out targets to be achieved or face the sack. It also required him to sign a code of conduct. But when he was offered the same $30,000-a-month salary that he had been paid during his first stint in charge, Keshi – who had asked for an increase – described the new deal as a "slave contract".

However, Felix Anyansi-Agwu of the NFF feels that Keshi ought to have walked away if he was unhappy with the offer. "He insulted us and our offer by describing it as a slave contract," says Anyansi-Agwu. "It's the NFF employing Keshi and not the other way round, so if he's not happy he can simply walk away because the role is not his birthright.

Get him out...Nigeria fans make their feelings plain

> "If he's not happy he can simply walk away because the role is not his birthright"
>
> Felix Anyansi-Agwu of the NFF on Keshi's wage demands as national coach

"The world is a big place with several interested coaches, so he should stop acting as if without him there is no one else."

Keshi has already looked into walking away, but the former Togo and Mali coach has found offers elsewhere hard to come by. In March, he lost out to Gernot Rohr and Alan Giresse in the race to take charge of Burkina Faso and Mali respectively.

NFF president Amaju Pinnick, who was responsible for the recent sacking and then recalling of Keshi, is keen to sort out a deal as soon as possible.

"If Keshi doesn't accept our offer, then I can tell you right away that he is not going to be our coach," said Pinnick. "If Keshi says, for example, that one clause in that contract is not good for him, it means he doesn't want the job, so we can now open it and look for other coaches who are ready to coach Nigeria."

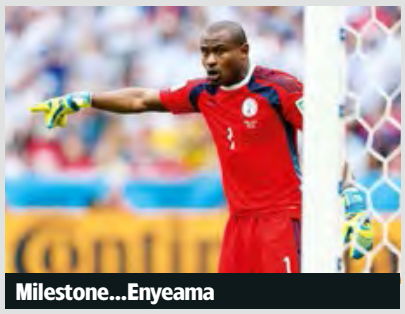
But Super Eagles captain Vincent Enyeama believes Nigerian football's problems go deeper than just the players and coaching staff.

"Everything is wrong with our football, from the top to the bottom," says the goalkeeper. "It's all rooted in poor management. We need to do the right thing, from the government to the man in charge of football if we plan to succeed." WS

ENYEAMA JOINS 100 CLUB

Goalkeeper and captain Vincent Enyeama became only the second Nigerian to win 100 caps for his country when he appeared against Uganda in March.

The 32-year-old, who plays his club football in France with Lille, joined the retired former Everton defender Joseph Yobo as a centurion in a game played in Enyeama's home state of Akwa Ibom, where the visitors turned out to be party-poopers with a 1-0 victory.



Milestone...Enyeama

"This is a milestone and I am glad to have achieved this," said Enyeama after his historic achievement. "I thank God for making it possible. I also say thank you to the fans who have supported me all the way."

Enyeama is only the fourth African goalkeeper – after Egyptians Essam El Hadary, Nader El Sayed and Ahmed Shobair – to win 100 caps.

➤ Skrtel's record.
SOUTH AFRICA: Bongani Zungu scores in injury time to salvage a 1-1 draw for *Bafana Bafana* at home to Nigeria, who score in the 85th minute through Ahmed Musa.

Monday *March 30*

BRAZIL: Bahia say Saturday's game at the Arena Fonte Nova, which they won 1-0 against Campinense, will be their last at the stadium, which was rebuilt for last year's World Cup. The club claim that their fans have not been respected at the new venue and they will use their home city of Salvador's old municipal ground.
COLOMBIA: He may be struggling at Manchester United but Radamel Falcao becomes Colombia's joint all-time leading scorer, alongside Arnoldo Iguaran, notching his 24th goal in a 3-1 win against Kuwait.
GREECE: National-team players Vangelis Moras, Panagiotis Tachtsidis and Ioannis Fetfatzidis are injured when the taxi taking them to the airport after Sunday's goalless draw in Hungary is involved in a crash that results in one person in the other car dying at the scene of the accident.
SWEDEN: Viktor Elm joins his brothers Rasmus and David at Kalmar as he moves from AZ of Holland ahead of the new Swedish league season.
TUNISIA: Maher Snoussi, the vice-president of the Tunisian Football Federation, negotiates a deal with CAF that will enable the national team to compete in the 2017 African Nations Cup qualifiers. Tunisia had been threatened with expulsion from the preliminary tournament if they did not apologise for claims of bias by officials in their quarter-final loss to hosts Equatorial Guinea in this year's competition.

Tuesday *March 31*

BELGIUM: Marouane Fellaini scores the only goal of the game away to Israel as Belgium, who have captain Vincent Kompany sent off, go top of their Euro qualifying group.
CAPE VERDE: Goals from Odair Fortes and Gege give the African minnows a surprise 2-0 victory away to Portugal, who have Andre Pinto sent off.
ENGLAND: Second-half substitute Andros Townsend, who is one of four Tottenham Hotspur players to finish the game for England, grabs a late equaliser – from a pass from debutant club-mate Ryan Mason – to earn a 1-1 draw with Italy in Turin.
GREAT BRITAIN: There will be no British representation in the 2016 Olympic football tournament in ➤

Turkey

MEHMET DEMIRCAN

Fenerbahce escape gun attack

Driver wounded as shots are fired at team bus after game

Turkey has lived with many kinds of hooliganism since the 1980s, but the events in April, on a motorway near Trabzon airport, shocked the nation. Set against the country's ongoing struggle to be accepted as a stable footballing environment, this was yet another dark episode.

After a 5-1 away win in their league game against Caykur Rizespor in the north-eastern province of Rize, Fenerbahce travelled by bus to nearby Trabzon in order to catch a flight back to Istanbul. However, in the Arsin district of Trabzon province, their bus was hit by gunfire, leaving the driver bleeding heavily.

"It was an armed assault," claimed the governor of Trabzon province, Abdil Celil Oz. "There's a metal object in the driver's cheekbone, but there is no brain damage and he is in no risk of death."

Fenerbahce's own TV station maintained that the team bus had been attacked by an assailant with a shotgun. Security officers on board quickly took control of the situation after the driver was hit and brought the bus safely to a halt. None of the players were hurt.

Shocked...Fenerbahce's Senegal international Sow

Attack... Fenerbahce staff remain on the bus as the bullet-shattered windscreen is examined

The attack raised all sorts of questions. Who could be so inhuman as to risk 50 lives by firing a gun at a bus driver? Why Fenerbahce? Why in Trabzon? Did the gunman really want to kill those on board or was it meant as a warning to Turkey's politicians?

Some argued that the attack could have been motivated by a disgruntled Trabzonspor fan. The club's president, Ibrahim Haciosmanoglu, has been a constant critic of Fenerbahce, arguing that his club should have been invited to take part in the 2010-11 Champions League after Fenerbahce were accused of match fixing.

Another theory is that the attack was politically motivated ahead of the forthcoming general election and a vote for the Turkish FA presidency.

The only good news following the incident was that the driver is still alive. However, the players, especially the foreigners in the team, were deeply affected.

Moussa Sow, Emmanuel Emenike, Pierre Webo and Diego all admitted that they didn't actually know what to say or how to react.

Former Holland forward Dirk Kuyt, who had stayed behind in Istanbul because he was unable to play due

to injury, was more forthcoming, saying: "My legs are shaking, I'm crying, because this is unbelievable. I can not continue like this any more." A week later Kuyt announced he will return to former club Feyenoord at the end of the season.

Brazilian midfielder Diego's relationship with the club is also uncertain and the matter is further complicated by his complaint, submitted to the FA, that he has not been paid for the past two months.

With problems mounting, Fenerbahce officials made a U-turn on their original declaration of "not playing until the criminals are behind bars" and went ahead with plans to complete the league fixture list.

Many observers think this may be a turning point in Turkish football. A subsequent crisis meeting between state president Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Super League captains was held up as proof that attitudes could change. But others believe that any foreign stars who receive an offer to play in Turkey will now think twice about their future.

Whatever happens in the rest of the season, those responsible for the shooting must be brought to justice. If they fail, another dark chapter in the history of Turkish football could become its darkest day. **WS**

> "I'm crying, because this is unbelievable. I can not continue like this any more"
>
> Fenerbahce's Dutch forward Dirk Kuyt

Questions...Fenerbahce officials face the media

Rio after Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland object to the English FA's proposal to enter a Great Britain team in both the men's and women's competitions.

MEXICO: Eduardo Herrera scores with his first touch in international football as Mexico beat Paraguay 1-0 in Kansas City. The 26-year-old Pumas striker made his debut in the final seconds of Mexico's 1-0 win over Ecuador on Saturday but did not touch the ball.

NEW ZEALAND: Stefan Marinovic gives away and then saves a penalty on his international debut but can't prevent substitute Lee Jae-sung's winning goal four minutes from time as South Korea win 1-0 in Seoul.

SPAIN: Sevilla winger Vitolo and Malaga forward Juanmi make their international debuts as Spain lose 2-0 to Holland in Amsterdam.

Wednesday *April 1*

ALBANIA: Serbian players Vilson Cakovic and Djordje Djordjevic quit top-flight side Apolonia over fears of reprisals after goalkeeper Cakovic grabbed an Albanian flag from a fan who ran onto the pitch in a league game against Tirana in March.

BRAZIL: Corinthians continue their winning streak in the Libertadores Cup, with Paolo Guerrero scoring a hat-trick in a 4-0 victory over Uruguay's Danubio to make it four wins from four games. In the same group, Sao Paulo lose 1-0 away to holders San Lorenzo of Argentina.

ENGLAND: Liverpool's 20-year-old striker Raheem Sterling causes outrage as he tells the BBC he turned down a new contract offer of £100,000 a week.

SPAIN: Elche players and staff cancel all non-playing commitments amid reports of financial problems. Just two points above the relegation zone, the club are reported to have been unable to pay any wages for the past two months.

Thursday *April 2*

ENGLAND: Hull City inform the Football Association that they will reapply to change their name to Hull Tigers in time for next season.

ROMANIA: Ioan Niculae, the billionaire owner of top-flight side Astra Giurgiu, is jailed for 30 months for his participation in the illegal financing of Mircea Geoana's presidential campaign in 2009.

Friday *April 3*

ALGERIA: CAF Champions League holders ES Setif reach the next round of this year's competition with a 2-0 win at home to Real Banjul ➤

➤ of Gambia. USM Alger join them with a 1-1 draw against Senegal champions AS Pikine to win.

Saturday *April 4*

ENGLAND: Arsenal move up to second place in the league with a 4-1 victory at home to Liverpool. The bottom two, Leicester City and Queens Park Rangers both win, 2-1 at home to West Ham United and 4-1 away at West Bromwich Albion respectively.
FRANCE: Goals from Nabil Fekir, Alexandre Lacazette and Clinton Njie put Lyon back on top of the table with a 3-1 win away to Guingamp.
GERMANY: Robert Lewandowski scores against his former club as runaway Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich win 1-0 away to Borussia Dortmund. The visitors' Thiago Alcantara comes off the bench for his first appearance after a year out with a knee injury.
ITALY: Second-place Roma win at home for the first time in nine Serie A games with a 1-0 victory against Napoli.
SWEDEN: Goalkeeping coach Daniel Andersson has to turn out for Helsingborg at the age of 42 in his club's opening game of the season, against Kalmar, and keeps a clean sheet to earn Henrik Larsson's side a 0-0 draw.
TURKEY: A gunman fires at the Fenerbahce team bus as they travel to the airport in Trabzon after their 5-1 victory at Rizespor. The driver is taken to hospital but no players are injured in the attack.

Sunday *April 5*

ALGERIA: MC El Eulma shock Asante Kotoko by winning 2-1 in Ghana to go through in the CAF Champions League.
ARGENTINA: Two goals from Cesar Meli give Boca Juniors a 2-0 victory at Huracan. The result puts them two points clear at the top of the table. River Plate move up to third with a 1-0 win against second-place San Lorenzo.
DR CONGO: Having drawn 0-0 in the away leg, Sanga Balende beat Cameroon's Coton Sport 2-0 to advance in the CAF Champions League knockout stage.
EGYPT: Smouha manage to overturn a 1-0 first-leg deficit by winning 2-1 on aggregate against Enyimba of Nigeria and advancing to the last 16 of the African Champions League.
ENGLAND: For the first time ever, Sunderland beat arch-rivals Newcastle United for a fifth successive game, as Jermain Defoe scores the only goal of the game at the Stadium of Light. Harry Kane becomes the Premier League's youngest captain this season as he leads Tottenham Hotspur in

Top...Zlatan Ibrahimovic scores for PSG against Marseille

Thailand

JOHN DUERDEN

Making their mark

Thais move out of their regional comfort zone

Four campaigns on from the last time they made it to the final stage of the Asian qualifiers for the World Cup, Thailand have a chance of making it to the second group phase again.

Drawn in Group F – along with regional rivals Indonesia and Vietnam, top seeds Iraq and lowly Chinese Taipei – anything less than second would be disappointing. Top spot, or finishing as one of the four best runners-up from the eight groups, would see the "War Elephants" through to the last 12 for the first time since the 2002 qualification campaign.

"Thailand are making some good progress, particularly with some of their young players who are starting to step up," says Ricardo Rodriguez, the Spanish coach of Thai Premier League club Bangkok Glass. "Thailand has some very talented youngsters coming through the ranks."

Among those on whose shoulders the hopes of over 60million South-east Asians rest are:

● **Chanathip Songkrasin** – standing 5ft 2in, the 21-year-old is small but in perfect form. And while his nickname "Messi Jay" may be optimistic, it points to his style of play.

● **Charyl Chappuis** – Swiss-born midfielder who was part of that country's Under-17 World Championship winning squad in 2009 before switching allegiance.

● **Kawin Thamsatchanan** – at 25, one of the best goalkeepers in the east and was once linked with Manchester United.

National coach Kiatisuk Senamuang did not want the job to begin with as he would be working under Worawi Makudi, the controversial Thai FA chief. But the man the Thais have nicknamed "Zico" eventually accepted, and since taking charge his young side have played a fearless brand of football which is a joy to watch, even if the defence is an obvious weak spot.

In the past, national coaches have complained about the Thai FA's habit of arranging cup competitions at the same time as international friendly dates or its inability to find decent opposition at all. But matters are improving with regard to the latter and, in March Cameroon had to fight hard to leave with a 3-2 win over their under-strength hosts.

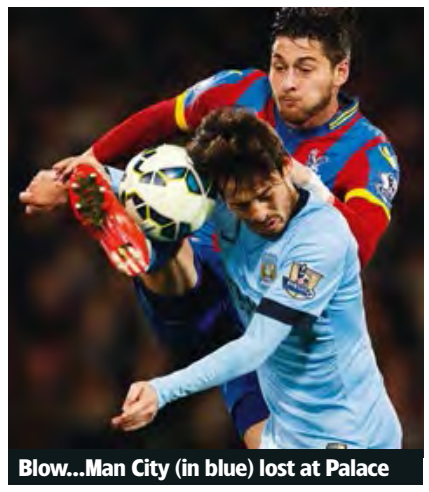
There was also frustration over international players going back to poorly coached clubs with poor facilities. But even that is changing, with Rodriguez claiming: "Each season it is getting better and better from what I've seen with other clubs. Overall, the Thai Premier League is improving every year."

Bangkok Glass are currently battling it out at the top of the league with Army United, who have been coached by former Tottenham Hotspur and England defender Gary Stevens since 2014. "Overall I'm

a goalless draw at Burnley.
FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain twice come from behind to win 3-2 at Marseille and return to the top of the league.
JAPAN: Ten days after his 48th birthday, Yokohama striker Kazuyoshi Miura extends his record as the oldest goalscorer in the Japanese league when he is on target in a 3-2 loss to Jubilo Iwata in the second-tier J2 League.
MEXICO: Tijuana lose 4-3 at home to Monterrey but retain a one-point lead at the top of the clausura standings as second-place Veracruz go down 3-1 at Tigres and third-placed Guadalajara draw 1-1 at Atlas.
RUSSIA: Hulk scores twice as league leaders Zenit increase their lead over second-place CSKA Moscow to eight points with a 2-1 win.
SPAIN: Cristiano Ronaldo scores five goals in a game for the first time in his career in a 9-1 thrashing of Granada. It is Real's biggest win since they beat Real Sociedad by the same score in September 1967.

Monday *April 6*

AUSTRALIA: Perth Glory join Melbourne Victory level on points at the top of the table with a 2-0 win over bottom side Newcastle Jets.
ENGLAND: A 2-1 defeat at Crystal Palace sees Manchester City lose four successive away games for the first time since 2006.


Blow...Man City (in blue) lost at Palace

NORWAY: The new Eliteserien campaign gets underway with last year's runners-up Rosenborg thrashing Aalesund 5-0.
TURKEY: All Super Lig and domestic cup games are suspended for one week following Saturday's gun attack on the Fenerbahce team bus.

Tuesday *April 7*

CANADA: Montreal Impact become the first Canadian club ever to make the Final of the CONCACAF Champions League. Leading 2-0 from their home leg of the semi-final against Alajuelense, they conceded four times in Costa Rica but scored twice themselves to go through on away goals.
ENGLAND: Christian Benteke scores a hat-trick as Aston Villa twice come from behind at home to Queens Park Rangers to draw 3-3 and avoid slipping into the relegation zone.
FRANCE: Currently sitting eighth in Ligue 2, second-tier Auxerre beat holders Guingamp 1-0 to reach the

History... Impact (in white) head for the Final

French Cup Final with a goal from Frederic Sammaritano, despite going down to 10 men when Jamel Ait Ben Idir was sent off.
GERMANY: Borussia Dortmund and Wolfsburg reach the German Cup semi-finals, beating Hoffenheim 3-2 and Freiburg 1-0 respectively.
HOLLAND: Dutch Cup holders PEC Zwolle are through to the Final again, beating Twente on penalties after a 1-1 draw.
ITALY: Juventus win 3-0 away at ➤

Star...Chanathip (right) celebrates scoring against the Philippines

Boss...Kiatisuk

impressed with the level of Thai football and I feel there is some momentum building with the national teams at different levels," says Stevens. "Technically the players are good.

"The league is competitive with, as in most leagues around the world, a few dominant clubs who are spending big on players and facilities."

These clubs include Muangthong United, Chonburi and reigning champions Buriram United. The title holders reached the last eight of the 2013 Asian Champions League and topped their group this season – above Chinese, Japanese and South Korean rivals – with two games to go. Buriram are owned by Thaksin Shinawatra's former ally and powerful national political figure Newin Chidchob, who moved the club to the rural north-east and tied it into the local community – some say to deepen his power base – allowing Buriram to now hold their own with the best in Asia.

> "I'm impressed with the level of Thai football and I feel there is some momentum building"
> Ex-England international Gary Stevens, who is now coach of Army United

The game in Thailand still has some way to go, however, with Stevens adding: "It requires a broader-based pyramid to produce players – much more schools football and weekend youth football. This needs to be established and grown to give opportunities to the undoubted football talent that exists here."

Rodriguez agrees and feels such changes could make a real difference, saying: "Obviously the TPL still has a little bit to go particularly technically, tactically and in players' decision-making skills. In Europe the decision making is quicker. If you don't know what you're going to do before you receive the ball you will probably lose it."

That will take time to change, but at least Thailand's club sides are starting to move out of their regional comfort zone. It is now time for the national team to do the same. WS

➤ Fiorentina to overturn a 2-1 first-leg deficit and reach the Italian Cup Final.

MEXICO: Tijuana winger Juan Arango is banned for two games after being found guilty of biting Monterrey's Jesus Zavala on the left shoulder during Sunday's Liga MX clash. The Venezuela international escaped punishment during the game, which Monterrey won 4-3.

RUSSIA: Krasnodar climb from third to second with a 2-1 win away to fourth-place Rubin Kazan. Torpedo Moscow receive their fourth racism-related punishment this season after fans displayed a banner bearing a Nazi symbol during Sunday's 3-1 win at Arsenal Tula.

SOUTH AFRICA: Former international striker Richard Henyekane, who won nine caps, dies following a car crash. The 31-year-old striker was on loan at Premier Soccer League side Free State Stars from Mamelodi Sundowns.

SPAIN: Atletico Madrid move to

Not giving up...Atletico Madrid

within six points of La Liga leaders Barcelona with a 2-0 win over Real Sociedad. At the other end of the table, Eibar end an 11-game winless run with a 1-0 victory over Malaga. An MRI scan confirms Iker Muniain ruptured an anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee during Athletic Bilbao's 2-0 loss at Sevilla on Saturday and will be out until at least October.

Wednesday *April 8*

CROATIA: June's crucial Euro qualifier at home to Italy in June will be played in an empty stadium as punishment for fans setting off fireworks, throwing missiles and racist behaviour in Zagreb during Croatia's 5-1 win over Norway in March.

ENGLAND: Philippe Coutinho scores the only goal of the game as Liverpool win at second-tier Blackburn Rovers in their FA Cup sixth round replay.

FRANCE: A hat-trick from Zlatan Ibrahimovic gives Paris Saint-Germain a 4-1 win at home to Saint-Etienne and secures their ➤

HOLLAND

KLAAS-JAN DROPPERT

Hiddink under fire

Euro qualification looks in doubt

"It's almost impossible not to qualify for Euro 2016," Guus Hiddink joked last September at the start of Holland's qualifying campaign. "If that happened, I would have to emigrate." Two months later the national coach announced he would leave if his team failed to beat Latvia.

Luckily for him – and the Dutch FA who appointed the 68-year-old in spite of Ronald Koeman's better qualifications – he was saved by his players, who ran out 6-0 winners in Amsterdam. However, the victory over Latvia was a small positive note in a qualification campaign in which everything else has gone wrong so far.

Two wins against minnows, two crucial defeats against rivals and a disappointing draw leaves Holland six points behind group leaders Czech Republic and five behind second-place Iceland. Direct qualification has become virtually out of reach, while they face a tough battle with Turkey to reach the play-offs.

So what has happened to the team that finished third at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil under Louis Van Gaal? Why is this current team so poor just a few months later?

Most answers centre on Hiddink. Anxious to show that he is not ready to retire, he accepted the offer to coach the national team for a second spell. But he has completely misjudged the situation and has got himself mixed up in a personal clash over a departure from his predecessor's 5-3-2 tactics, claiming the traditional Dutch 4-3-3 would return. It is no secret that Van Gaal and Hiddink aren't exactly close friends.

For all the talk about tactics, after a blundering defence conceded two goals in a friendly against Italy, he suddenly switched to a 5-3-2 system for the opening qualifier against Czech Republic – a 2-1 defeat following a silly last-minute own goal by Daryl Janmaat.

The performances didn't get any better against Kazakhstan, with the Dutch coming from behind to clinch a less than convincing 3-1 win. When that was followed by a 2-0 loss to Iceland, Dutch FA director Bert van Oostveen criticised Hiddink in public, saying: "At first the problems seemed to be an accident but now they are more structural."

Hiddink's tactics had failed, his explanations were feeble and his laid-back attitude wasn't what the team needed – as Van Gaal's omnipresence had shown. Many critics felt that he didn't have the hunger anymore and after poor performances in his previous two jobs – Turkish national team and Anzhi in Russia – perhaps he should have called it a day, rather than return.

> "Hiddink has had a great career but his methods are archaic. He has no game plan"
> Ronald De Boer

The fiercest criticism came from a former player,

Mis-firing...Luciano Narsingh spurns a chance against Turkey

Ronald De Boer, who had served under Hiddink at Euro 96 and the 1998 World Cup. "Hiddink has had a great career but his methods are archaic," said De Boer. "He has no game plan."

After being called to a meeting with Van Oostveen, Hiddink decided to stay on. But the next game, a crucial 1-1 home draw with Turkey, showed no improvement and discussions afterwards concentrated on why Hiddink had started with Nigel De Jong instead of the in-form Jordy Clasie. The game against the ultra-defensive Turks needed a precise passer, not a ball winner. Even days later, and having analysed the game, Hiddink was still convinced of his choice, leaving many in despair.

Criticism...Hiddink faces growing pressure

In 1995, after a defeat against Belarus, Hiddink thought Holland had been eliminated from the Euros, only to hear at Minsk airport that, with Luxembourg defeating the Czech Republic, a miracle had happened. Victory in the play-offs against the Republic of Ireland saw his side though, and maybe history will repeat itself.

If not, the feeling will remain that Hiddink should have handed over control much earlier to his assistant Danny Blind, who is due to take charge after Euro 2016. WS

Brazil

TIM VICKERY

Team by team

The 20 contenders for the national championship

SAO PAULO STATE
Capital: Sao Paulo

CORINTHIANS
Back under the guidance of coach Tite – who was in charge during the all-conquering 2011-12 campaign – and looking sharp and compact. However, the Libertadores Cup is a distraction and they will lose key players during the Copa America.

SAO PAULO
Came second last year but the squad looks better on paper than on the pitch – a fact that forced out coach Muricy Ramalho. They are struggling to live up to the standards set in the middle of the last decade.

PALMEIRAS
Having just avoided relegation last year, morale is high and they will be one to watch. They have an excellent new stadium and a renovated squad led by experienced boss Oswaldo De Oliveira.

SANTOS
The team from the port city are full of attacking options but the mood in a feisty dressing room will not be improved by financial problems. They remain possible outsiders, though.

> Santos and Palmeiras are the most successful clubs in the country, having each won the title eight times

PONTE PRETA
From Campinas, some 60 miles outside Sao Paulo. They are back in the top flight at the first attempt but have been a yo-yo club of late and survival will be the prime objective.

RIO DE JANEIRO STATE
Capital: Rio de Janeiro

FLAMENGO
The traditional powerhouse have been chaotically run but are now building sensibly for the long term. The team should perform solidly, but Vanderlei Luxemburgo's men are unlikely to be title contenders.

FLUMINENSE
Suffering from the loss of a deep-pocketed sponsor and with a squad that is much thinner than the one that finished sixth last year. They have some good youngsters, but can they keep them?

VASCO DA GAMA
Back after one season in the second division but the promotion campaign was hardly convincing, and it will be a surprise if coach Doriva can keep them in title contention.

Chaotic...Luxemburgo will try to bring calmer times to Flamengo

MINAS GERAIS STATE
Capital: Belo Horizonte

CRUZEIRO
The team that had won the previous two titles was suddenly broken up at the start of the year and coach Marcelo Oliveira is grooming a new side that shows promise. The squad does, however, lack depth.

ATLETICO MINEIRO
Cup holders and the team in the best form at the end of 2014. Levir Culpi was unlucky with injuries earlier this year, but with everyone fit the coach has a side that will attack at pace.

RIO GRANDE DO SUL STATE
Capital: Porto Alegre

GREMIO
Came seventh last year and had the best defensive record in the league. Financial problems have led to some cost-cutting, but Luiz Felipe Scolari can still count on a squad that looks capable of qualifying for the Libertadores Cup.

INTERNACIONAL
Finished third in 2014 and another challenge for a Libertadores spot should be possible. Uruguayan coach Diego Aguirre was by no means first choice as the new man in charge and he has spent much of his early months under pressure.

PARANA STATE
Capital: Curitiba

ATLETICO PARANAENSE
Champions in 2001 – the last time the title left the major centres. A forward-looking, ambitious club who recently appointed Enderson Moreira as coach.

CORITIBA
Had to fight hard to avoid relegation in the last two years. Marquinhos Santos, who is one of the country's most promising young coaches, has had more opportunity to prepare this time around and he will hope for a solid, mid-table finish.

High hopes...but Cruzeiro's dreams of a third successive title rest on a new squad

SANTA CATARINA STATE
Capital: Florianopolis

FIGUEIRENSE
The club from the state capital have yo-yoed between the first and second divisions in recent years but finished a creditable 13th last season on their return to the top flight. Coached by Argel Fucks.

JOINVILLE
In the fourth tier as recently as 2010 but winners of last year's second division and back in the top flight for the first time in 28 years. Good local form gives rise to hopes of survival.

CHAPECOENSE
From the booming agricultural town of Chapeco to the west of the state, they won two consecutive promotions and then did well to finish 15th last year in the top flight. They would be delighted with a repeat.

AVAI
Club from the capital who just managed to win promotion, but whose subsequent local form has been so poor that they are widely seen as relegation favourites. Experienced coach Gilson Kleina has been brought in to steady the ship.

State rivals...but Sao Paulo (in red) are not a patch on the team of the last decade, while Corinthians may be distracted by the Libertadores Cup

GOIAS STATE
Capital: Goiania

GOIAS
Having finished sixth and 12th since winning the second division in 2012, they are attractive if somewhat low-profile participants in the top flight. Helio dos Anjos is in his fifth spell in charge.

PERNAMBUCO STATE
Capital: Recife

SPORT
The north-east's sole representative after finishing 11th on last year's return to the top flight. Recent good form means Eduardo Baptista's side go into the campaign with hopes of a mid-table finish.

SERIE A: 2015

1. Atletico Mineiro
   Cruzeiro (Belo Horizonte)
2. Atletico Paranaense
   Coritiba (Curitiba)
3. Avai (Florianopolis)
   Figueirense
4. Chapecoense (Chapeco)
5. Corinthians (Sao Paulo)
   Palmeiras
   Sao Paulo
6. Flamengo (Rio de Janeiro)
   Fluminense
   Vasco da Gama
7. Goias (Goiania)
8. Gremio (Porto Alegre)
   Internacional
9. Joinville
10. Ponte Preta (Campinas)
11. Santos
12. Sport (Recife)

➤ place in the French Cup Final.
GABON: CAF names Gabon as host nation for the finals of the 2017 African Nations Cup.
GERMANY: Third-tier Arminia Bielefeld knock Borussia Monchengladbach out of the German Cup on penalties. Bayern Munich also go through on spot-kicks, against Bayer Leverkusen.
HOLLAND: Groningen, who have never won the Dutch Cup, will meet holders PEC Zwolle in the Final, on May 3 at Rotterdam's De Kuip stadium, after beating Excelsior 3-0.
ITALY: Senad Lulic scores late on to put Lazio in the Italian Cup Final with a 1-0 win at Napoli, having drawn the first leg 1-1 at the Stadio Olimpico last month. In Serie A, Parma win for the first time since early January, beating mid-table Udinese 1-0.
MEXICO: Despite surrendering a two-goal lead, Tigres go through to the last 16 of the Libertadores Cup with a 2-2 draw against River Plate. Dario Benedetto scores four times as America overturn a 3-0 deficit from the first leg to beat Herediano of Costa Rica 6-0 in the semi-finals of the CONCACAF Champions League.
RUSSIA: UEFA award Russia a 3-0 win over Montenegro following the abandonment of their Euro qualifier in Podgorica.
SAUDI ARABIA: Nasser Al Shamrani becomes the AFC Champions League's all-time leading scorer with his 26th goal in the competition as Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal beat Foolad of Iran 2-0.
SCOTLAND: Dundee beat Dundee United for the first time in 10 years, winning 3-1 at home to go two points behind their city rivals.
SERBIA: Partizan Belgrade will meet city rivals Cukaricki in the Serbian Cup Final after winning their semi-finals 5-0 and 6-1 on aggregate, against Jagodina and Vozdovac.
SPAIN: Cristiano Ronaldo scores his 300th goal for Real Madrid as they win 2-0 at Rayo Vallecano. Lionel Messi is also on target as Barcelona beat Almeria 4-0.
VENEZUELA: A goalless draw at home to Sporting Cristal of Peru ends Deportivo Tachira's chances of progressing from the group stage of the Libertadores Cup.

Thursday *April 9*

ARGENTINA: Boca Juniors maintain their 100 per cent record in this season's Libertadores Cup with a 3-0 victory over Montevideo Wanderers in Uruguay.
FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic is banned for four games after a televised rant in ➤

Europe

GAVIN HAMILTON

Qualifying round-up

Wales, Northern Ireland and Iceland close in on Euro 2016

The expansion of the European Championship to 24 teams raised the possibility of a number of first-time finalists qualifying for next year's tournament in France. And so it has proved, with Wales, Northern Ireland and Iceland emerging as strong contenders to qualify.

In the latest round of qualifiers, Wales secured a crucial victory in Israel – largely thanks to Real Madrid's Gareth Bale, who set up Aaron Ramsey's goal, then scored two himself.

Wales have not qualified for a major tournament since the 1958 World Cup in Sweden. They came close to making Euro 2004, when Manchester United winger Ryan Giggs was the star man, but fell to Russia in the play-offs.

Giggs' relationship with the national side was tetchy, with only a handful of friendly appearances among his 64 caps because of "injuries". In contrast, Real Madrid, mindful of their international profile, have encouraged Bale to play for his country.

Manager Chris Coleman, who was appointed in the tragic aftermath of Gary Speed's suicide, has built the side around the talismanic Bale.

"We've got the chance to prove we are the best Welsh team since the one that qualified for the 1958 World Cup," said Coleman. "We nearly did it in 1994 and 2004 and now we have the opportunity to go a step further."

Wales face a crucial home fixture against Belgium in June but then have winnable home games against Israel and Andorra as well as a trip to Cyprus.

Kyle Lafferty's two goals took Northern Ireland a step closer to their first European Championship qualification after a 2-1 win over Finland.

Lafferty has spent the second half of the season on loan at Turkish side Caykur Rizespor after failing to start at Championship side Norwich City. But he has proved indispensable for his country, with five goals in five games so far in the Euro qualifying campaign.

Michael O'Neill's side are second in Group F, a point behind Romania, who visit Belfast in June.

Veteran striker Eidur Gudjohnsen scored against Kazakhstan on his return to the Iceland side after retiring from international football in 2013. Two further goals from Birkir Bjarnason helped Iceland to a 3-0 away win that reinforced their position in Group A behind Czech Republic, who themselves have not qualified for a major tournament since Euro 2004. Both teams have benefitted from the poor form of Holland (see page 84).

Heimir Hallgrimsson, Iceland's co-coach, who is working alongside Lars Lagerback and will take the job outright in 2016 ahead of the World Cup qualifying campaign, said: "We have made a brilliant start in qualifying. We have 12 points and 12 goals scored, with two conceded. That's something we are not used to."

Iceland face crucial games, at home to the Czechs in June, and away to Holland in September and to Turkey in October.

Only two teams still have 100 per cent records: England and Slovakia.

Under former Kosice boss Jan Kozlak, Slovakia have maintained their winning momentum since ending Spain's eight-year unbeaten run last October with a shock 2-1 win.

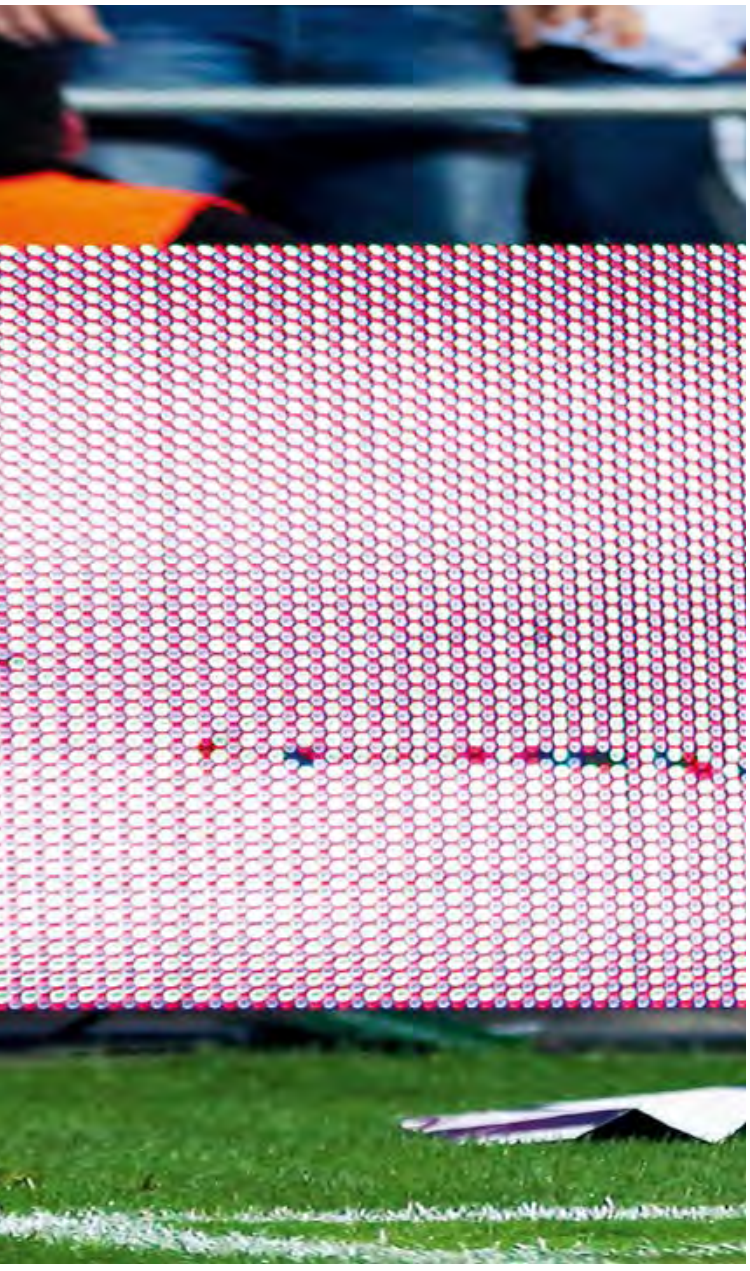
The winning streak has also included friendly victories over Finland and, most recently, Czech Republic, who lost 1-0 in Zilina thanks to a goal from Legia Warsaw midfielder Ondrej Duda.

England manager Roy Hodgson gave a senior debut to Tottenham Hotspur sensation Harry Kane, who scored

Impressive...Bale (far right) celebrates scoring against Israel

> "We've got the chance to prove we are the best Welsh team since the one that qualified for the 1958 World Cup"
> Wales manager Chris Coleman

On target...Lafferty (right) against Finland



within two minutes of his substitute appearance in the 4-0 victory over Lithuania at Wembley.

Other major nations have experienced wobbles but are unlikely to face the humiliation of qualifying failure. "We're not yet back on track and have to improve, " declared Germany captain Bastian Schweinsteiger after his side's 2-0 win in Georgia. The world champions looked particularly vulnerable at full-back, where Hoffenheim's Sebastian Rudy and Cologne's Jonas Hector have come into the side since the World Cup. Rudy has the difficult task of replacing Philipp Lahm at right-back and struggled against the Georgians in Tbilisi.

Italy gave a debut to Sampdoria's Brazilian-born forward Eder and he scored the equaliser in a 2-2 draw with Bulgaria that maintained the *Azzurri*'s unbeaten record so far in qualifying.

Spain beat Ukraine 1-0 in Seville to stay in second place behind Slovakia in Group C, but apathy towards the national side was reflected in 20,000 empty seats at the Sanchez Pizjuan stadium.

Juventus forward Alvaro Morata scored the only goal of the game and was hailed as "the future of the national team" by Santi Cazorla afterwards.

Given Diego Costa's injury worries, Morata's emergence was good news for Spain coach Vicente Del Bosque. The bad news was that while Spain dominated the first half and could have scored more, the second saw them struggle, producing just one shot on target and coming under increasing pressure.

"We lost control. The second half left a bad taste in the mouth," Del Bosque admitted. **WS**

which he attacked referees and said that France "does not deserve PSG. We are too good for this country".

POLAND: Trailing 3-1 from the away leg, Lech Poznan go behind at home before taking Stargard Szczecinski to extra time and winning 6-4 on aggregate in the Polish Cup. They now face Legia Warsaw in the Final.

SPAIN: Ex-Valencia striker Aritz Aduriz's scores in the last minute to earn Athletic Bilbao a 1-1 draw with his former club. Espanyol extend Villarreal's winless streak to six games in all competitions with a 3-0 win.

Friday *April 10*

AUSTRALIA: Perth Glory are banned from the A-League finals after being found guilty of salary-cap breaches. A 3-0 loss at home to Sydney sees Glory sit joint top with their visitors and Melbourne Victory, but their final league position will be adjusted at the end of the season and they will be placed seventh.

BELARUS: Looking for a 10th consecutive league title, BATE kick off the new domestic season with a 1-0 victory at home to Slavia.

FRANCE: Monaco beat Caen to make it four away wins on the trot and move up into third place.

GERMANY: Hanover miss their chance of a first win this year as Hertha Berlin come from behind to claim a 1-1 draw.

HOLLAND: Debt-stricken Twente are handed a second three-point deduction by the Dutch Football Association for failing to meet the targets that were set for their financial recovery.

Saturday *April 11*

BOLIVIA: Universitario Sucre's game at Bolivar is abandoned after 12 minutes when one of their players is injured, leaving the visitors – who started the game with seven players – down to six. The FA had ignored Sucre's request to postpone the game so that they could concentrate on Tuesday's Libertadores Cup game, so they turned up with just seven youth-team players in protest.

ENGLAND: Arsenal win an eighth game on the trot for the first time since the "Invincibles" season of 2003-04 as they beat Burnley 1-0.

FRANCE: Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Edinson Cavani score two each as Paris Saint-Germain retain the French League Cup with a 4-0 victory in the Final over Bastia, who have defender Sebastien Squillaci sent off. Bastia striker Brandao, who has not played since August after being jailed and banned for six months for a head-butt on PSG midfielder Thiago Motta, comes on as a late substitute.

GERMANY: Wolfsburg make sure of their place in next season's Champions League with a 2-0 win at Hamburg, who drop into the Bundesliga's bottom two. Bayern Munich edge closer to the title with a 3-0 win over Eintracht Frankfurt.

HOLLAND: NAC Breda boss Robert Maaskant cuts his hand while punching a hole in his dugout as his Eredivisie strugglers surrender a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at home to bottom side Dordrecht.

ITALY: Bottom of the league Parma beat Juventus 1-0, with the league leaders losing in Serie A for only the second time this season.

MEXICO: Veracruz draw 1-1 with Morelia to go joint top of the clausura table with Tijuana, who lose 2-1 at Queretaro.

PORTUGAL: Benfica beat 5-1 Academica to stay three points clear of Porto, who beat Rio Ave 3-1, at the top of the Portuguese Primeira Liga.

RUSSIA: Krasnodar win 3-2 in the derby with Kuban Krasnodar to consolidate second place.

SPAIN: Barcelona let slip a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at Sevilla, while Real Madrid win 3-0 at home to Eibar. Teenage striker Santi Mina scores four goals as Celta Vigo hammer Rayo Vallecano 6-1.

Shock...Parma (in white) bring down Juventus

Sunday *April 12*

ARGENTINA: Four players are sent off as Lanus win 2-1 at Banfield.

ENGLAND: Manchester United beat neighbours Manchester City to stay third, eight points behind leaders Chelsea, who win 1-0 away to QPR.

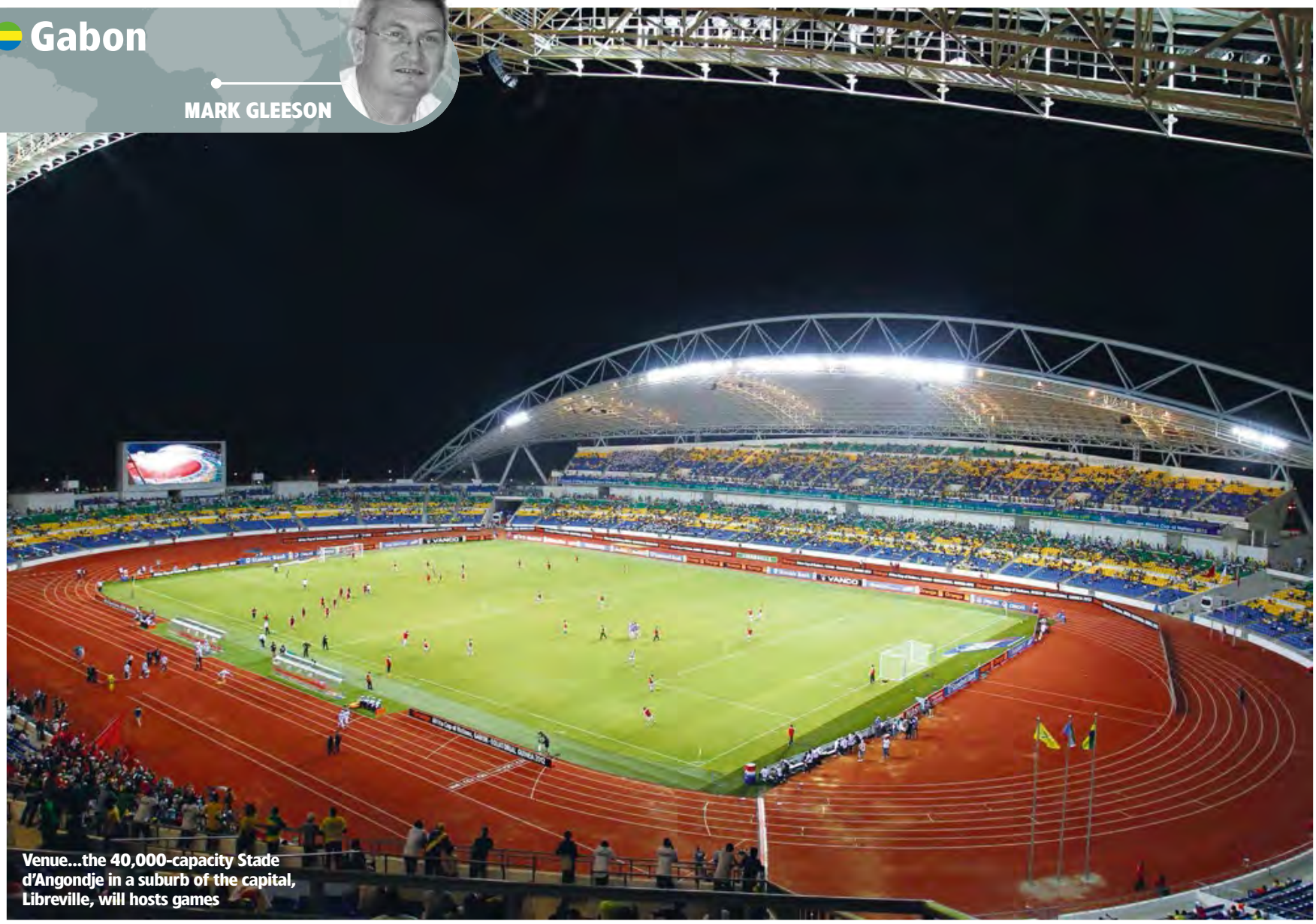
FINLAND: HJK begin their defence of the Veikkausliiga title with a 3-1 win at RoPS.

FRANCE: Marseille suffer back-to-back domestic defeats for the first time this season with a 1-0 loss at Bordeaux. New Reims coach Olivier Guegan sees his side lose 1-0 at home to Nice.

GERMANY: Stuttgart climb off the bottom of the Bundesliga with a ➤

Gabon

MARK GLEESON



Venue...the 40,000-capacity Stade d'Angondje in a suburb of the capital, Libreville, will hosts games

Nations Cup host decided

2012 co-hosts edge out Algeria and Ghana in 2017 vote

Algeria and Ghana already have the infrastructure and a strong football culture, but in the end Gabon was chosen to host the next African Nations Cup finals in 2017. And although it did not come as a surprise – all the talk before the decision was announced had been about the oil-rich nation – the exact reasons why were not made clear.

Co-hosts of the 2012 finals with neighbours Equatorial Guinea, Gabon has just two functional stadiums, in Libreville and Franceville, so the promise to complete projects in Port-Gentil and Oyem is one possible reason as CAF has long sought to use the hosting of the tournament to get governments to build or upgrade sporting infrastructure.

But Algeria has seven stadium upgrades planned and would have used two new planned venues, in Algiers and Oran. Maybe the endemic crowd violence – which last year saw a Cameroonian player killed when a stray projectile caused a massive cranial blood trauma – counted against them, as might the political machinations which saw their once-powerful football federation president Mohamed Raouraoua fall from grace.

Ghana's delegation to the event in Cairo was a heavyweight parade of ministers, but they proposed a repeat of the finals they hosted in 2008 – using the same venues in Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi and Tamale, with possibly a fifth venue, also in the Cape Coast/Sekondi area. But those plans obviously did not convince the CAF ExCo.

Result...Hayatou

With no details released of the actual vote tally, it is not clear how close it was.

The presentations and voting were conducted behind closed doors and, after a wait of about an hour, CAF president Issa Hayatou went on stage. He opened an envelope, revealed the name "Gabon" and then sat back down again without a word, as the day's business then moved swiftly on to the draw for the qualifiers.

Two years ago CAF designated Cameroon (2019), the Ivory Coast (2021) and Guinea (2023) as future Nations Cup hosts.

For 2017, Gabon replace Libya who had originally been handed the 2012 finals but then swapped with South Africa in the wake of security concerns in the early days of the post-Gaddafi era. The situation in Libya has deteriorated rapidly to a general state of lawlessness, which now means no football, never mind a Nations Cup, is possible. WS

At present, Gabon has just two functional stadiums, in Libreville and Franceville

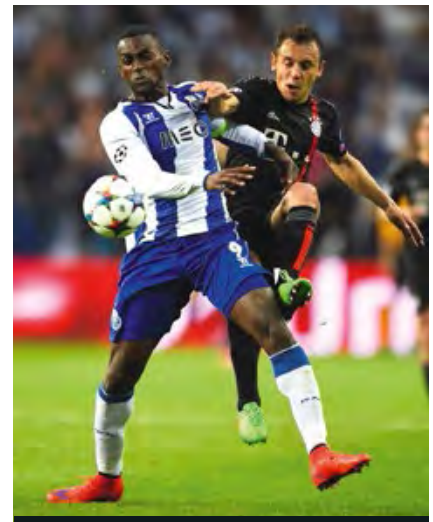
➤ 3-2 victory over Werder Bremen. Cologne ease their relegation worries with a 3-2 win against Hoffenheim.
ITALY: Lazio beat Empoli 4-0 at the Stadio Olimpico and go second in Serie A, replacing city rivals Roma who drew 1-1 at Torino.
SWITZERLAND: Play is halted and the players leave the pitch for 10 minutes after Zurich fans throw fireworks and flares during their side's 5-1 defeat at Basle.
USA: Los Angeles Galaxy move off the bottom of the MLS Western Conference with a 1-0 victory over Seattle Sounders.

Monday *April 13*

ARGENTINA: River Plate win 2-1 at Argentinos Juniors to go level on points with Boca Juniors, Rosario Central and San Lorenzo at the top of the league.
CROATIA: A football federation delegation, including national coach Niko Kovac, is attacked by Hajduk Split fans at a rest-stop on the motorway between Split and Zagreb.
ENGLAND: Chelsea under-19s win the UEFA Youth League, beating Shakhtar Donetsk 3-2 in the Final, with goals from captain Izzy Brown (two) and Dominic Solanke, who finishes as the tournament's top scorer with 12 goals.
RUSSIA: Amkar Perm, bottom of the league, shock second-place CSKA Moscow, beating them 1-0 with a goal from Igor Kireev.
SCOTLAND: Liam Boyce's hat-trick in a 3-0 win at bottom club St Mirren means Ross County can not be automatically relegated.
SPAIN: Valencia go a point behind third-placed Atletico Madrid with a 3-0 win over local rivals Levante.

Tuesday *April 14*

BRAZIL: Second division side Mogi Mirim appoint Pele's son Edinho as coach. However, it remains to be seen whether the 44-year-old can take up his post as he is waiting to be sentenced over the laundering of drug money.
ITALY: Arturo Vidal's penalty gives Juventus a 1-0 lead from the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final in Turin.
SPAIN: Real Madrid fail to beat neighbours Atletico for the seventh time this season, drawing 0-0 at the Vicente Calderon in the Champions League – their first goalless draw in Europe since November 2007.


Third goal...Porto's Martinez

Wednesday *April 15*

ARGENTINA: River Plate secure their place in the last 16 of the Libertadores Cup, overcoming San Jose of Bolivia 3-0 as group winners Tigres beat Peru's Juan Aurich 5-4.
ENGLAND: A new book claims that the fire at Bradford City in 1985, which claimed the lives of 56 fans, was the ninth blaze at businesses owned or associated with the club's then chairman, Stafford Heginbotham.
FRANCE: A bad day for Paris Saint-Germain as they lose 3-1 at home to Barcelona in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final and surrender top spot in Ligue 1 to Lyon, who beat Bastia 2-0.
GERMANY: Borussia Dortmund announce that coach Jurgen Klopp will leave the club at the end of the season. The 47-year-old asked to be released from his contract, which was due to run until 2018.
PORTUGAL: Ricardo Quaresma scores twice and Jackson Martinez adds a third in the 65th minute, as Porto beat Bayern Munich 3-1 at home in the Champions League.
SCOTLAND: Second-half sub Leigh Griffiths scores a hat-trick in 19 minutes as Celtic come from behind to win 4-1 at home to Kilmarnock.
USA: Tottenham Hotspur will provide the opposition for this year's MLS All-Star Game on July 29.
VIETNAM: Six players from top-flight club Dong Nai are banned for life after being found guilty of fixing a domestic game against Quang Ninh Coal, in 2014, which they lost 5-3.

Top... Ronaldo

Hot shot... Aguero

Pos	NAME		Goals	Factor	Points
1	Cristiano Ronaldo	(Real Madrid)	38	2	76
2	Lionel Messi	(Barcelona)	34	2	68
3	Sergio Aguero	(Manchester City)	19	2	38
	Diego Costa	(Chelsea)	19	2	38
	Harry Kane	(Tottenham Hotspur)	19	2	38
	Alexander Meier	(Eintracht Frankfurt)	19	2	38
7	Antoine Griezmann	(Atletico Madrid)	18	2	36
	Evgeni Kabaev	(Sillamae Kalev)	36	1	36
	Alexandre Lacazette	(Lyon)	24	1.5	36
	Neymar	(Barcelona)	18	2	36
	Jonatan Soriano	(Red Bull Salzburg)	24	1.5	36
	Eran Zahavi	(Maccabi Tel Aviv)	24	1.5	36
13	Charlie Austin	(Queens Park Rangers)	17	2	34
	Carlos Bacca	(Sevilla)	17	2	34
	Jackson Martinez	(Porto)	17	2	34
	Arjen Robben	(Bayern Munich)	17	2	34
	Carlos Tevez	(Juventus)	17	2	34
18	Andrej Kramaric	(Rijeka/Leicester City)	21/1	1.5/2	33.5
19	Alberto Bueno	(Rayo Vallecano)	16	2	32
	Mauro Icardi	(Internazionale)	16	2	32
	Robert Lewandowski	(Bayern Munich)	16	2	32
	Jeremy Menez	(Milan)	16	2	32
	Igor Subbotin	(Levadia Tallinn)	32	1	32
24	Shkelzen Gashi	(Basle)	21	1.5	31.5
25	Karim Benzema	(Real Madrid)	15	2	30
	Robert Beric	(Rapid Vienna)	20	1.5	30
	Manucho	(Infonet)	30	1	30
	Luca Toni	(Verona)	15	2	30
29	Joe Gormley	(Cliftonville)	29	1	29
30	Memphis Depay	(PSV)	19	1.5	28.5
31	Olivier Giroud	(Arsenal)	14	2	28

Pos	NAME		Goals	Factor	Point
	Jonas	(Benfica)	14	2	28
	Lima	(Benfica)	14	2	28
	Alexis Sanchez	(Arsenal)	14	2	28
	Vladislavs Gutkovskis	(Skonto Riga)	28	1	28
36	Andre-Pierre Gignac	(Marseille)	18	1.5	27
	Chris Venables	(Aberystwyth Town)	27	1	27
38	Gareth Bale	(Real Madrid)	13	2	26
	Bas Dost	(Wolfsburg)	13	2	26
	Paulo Dybala	(Palermo)	13	2	26
	Gonzalo Higuain	(Napoli)	13	2	26
	Marco Andre Matias	(Nacional)	13	2	26
	Thomas Muller	(Bayern Munich)	13	2	26
	Jordan Owens	(Crusaders)	26	1	26
45	Fernandao	(Bursaspor)	17	1.5	25.5
	Zlatan Ibrahimovic	(Paris Saint-Germain)	17	1.5	25.5
	Luuk De Jong	(PSV)	17	1.5	25.5
48	Vidar Orn Kjartansson	(Valerenga)	25	1	25
	Edison Luis dos Santos	(Hibernian)	25	1	25
50	Aritz Aduriz	(Athletic Bilbao)	12	2	24
	Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang	(Borussia Dortmund)	12	2	24
	Jeronimo Barrales	(Asteras Tripolis)	16	1.5	24
	Saido Berahino	(West Bromwich Albion)	12	2	24
	Eden Hazard	(Chelsea)	12	2	24
	Koka	(Rio Ave)	12	2	24
	Michiel Kramer	(Den Haag)	16	1.5	24
	Mario Mandzukic	(Atletico Madrid)	12	2	24
	Wayne Rooney	(Manchester United)	12	2	24
	Franco Di Santo	(Werder Bremen)	12	2	24
	Luciano Vietto	(Villarreal)	12	2	24

ESM XI

EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

MARCH 2015

HOW IT WORKS

Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Media group select their first XI based on the best individual performances from Europe's top competitions. For details of how each ESM member voted, visit worldsoccer.com/esm11

SEASON RANKINGS

Cumulative votes through the season

GOALKEEPERS

Manuel NEUER (Bayern Munich)	19 votes
David DE GEA (Manchester United)	17
Gianluigi BUFFON (Juventus)	13
Thibaut COURTOIS (Chelsea)	10
Bernd LENO (Bayer Leverkusen)	4
Danijel SUBASIC (Monaco)	4
Claudio BRAVO (Barcelona)	3
David OSPINA (Arsenal)	3
Iker CASILLAS (Real Madrid)	2
Joe HART (Manchester City)	2
Simon MIGNOLET (Liverpool)	2
ROBERTO (Olympiakos)	2
Igor AKINFEEV (CSKA Moscow)	1
Sergio ALVAREZ (Celta Vigo)	1
Diego ALVES (Valencia)	1
Fraser FORSTER (Southampton)	1
Jasmin HANDANOVIC (Maribor)	1
Hugo LLORIS (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Anthony LOPES (Lyon)	1
Diego LOPEZ (Milan)	1
Steve MANDANDA (Marseille)	1
Stephane RUFFIER (Saint-Etienne)	1
Yann SOMMER (Borussia Monchengladbach)	1

DEFENDERS

Branislav IVANOVIC (Chelsea)	30
Sergio RAMOS (Real Madrid)	21
David ALABA (Bayern Munich)	20
Giorgio CHIELLINI (Juventus)	16
Gerard PIQUE (Barcelona)	15
John TERRY (Chelsea)	15
PEPE (Real Madrid)	13
Juan BERNAT (Bayern Munich)	12
Diego GODIN (Atletico Madrid)	11
MARCELO (Real Madrid)	11
David LUIZ (Paris Saint-Germain)	9
MIRANDA (Atletico Madrid)	9
JUANFRAN (Atletico Madrid)	8
Jeremy MATHIEU (Barcelona)	8
NALDO (Wolfsburg)	8
Jerome BOATENG (Bayern Munich)	7
Stephan LICHTSTEINER (Juventus)	7
Leonardo BONUCCI (Juventus)	6
Ricardo RODRIGUEZ (Wolfsburg)	6
Pablo ZABALETA (Manchester City)	6
Jordi ALBA (Barcelona)	5
Nathaniel CLYNE (Southampton)	5
MAXWELL (Paris Saint-Germain)	5
Nicolas OTAMENDI (Valencia)	5
DANILO (Porto)	4
Javier MASCHERANO (Barcelona)	4
Nicolas N'KOULOU (Marseille)	4
Gary CAHILL (Chelsea)	3
Jose Luis GAYA (Valencia)	3
Kostas MANOLAS (Roma)	3
Maxi PEREIRA (Benfica)	3
Thiago SILVA (Paris Saint-Germain)	3
Martin SKRTEL (Liverpool)	3
Martin STRANZL (Borussia Monchengladbach)	3
Aymen ABDENNOUR (Monaco)	2
Dani ALVES (Barcelona)	2
Leighton BAINES (Everton)	2
Mehdi BENATIA (Bayern Munich)	2
Dani CARVAJAL (Real Madrid)	2
Ashley COLE (Roma)	2
Jose FONTE (Southampton)	2
Jose GIMENEZ (Atletico Madrid)	2
Christophe JALLET (Lyon)	2
Laurent KOSCIELNY (Arsenal)	2
Nacho MONREAL (Arsenal)	2
RAFINHA (Bayern Munich)	2
Danny ROSE (Tottenham Hotspur)	2
Paul VERHAEGH (Augsburg)	2
Toby ALDERWEIRELD (Southampton)	1
Jordan AMAVI (Nice)	1
Davide ASTORI (Roma)	1
Cesar AZPILICUETA (Chelsea)	1
Dusan BASTA (Lazio)	1
Hector BELLERIN (Arsenal)	1
Ryan BERTRAND (Southampton)	1
Milan BISEVAC (Lyon)	1
Daley BLIND (Manchester United)	1
Alex BRUCE (Hull City)	1
Martin CACERES (Juventus)	1
CAICARA (Ludogorets)	1
CARLAO (APOEL)	1
Gael CLICHY (Manchester City)	1
Damien DA SILVA (Caen)	1
Scott DANN (Crystal Palace)	1
Patrice EVRA (Juventus)	1
FABINHO (Monaco)	1
Rod FANNI (Marseille)	1
Kieran GIBBS (Arsenal)	1
Faouzi GHOULAM (Napoli)	1
Camil GLICK (Torino)	1
Raphael GUERREIRO (Lorient)	1
Benedikt HOWEDES (Schalke)	1
Mats HUMMELS (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Daryl JANMAAT (Newcastle United)	1
Tin JEDVAJ (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
JEFFERSON (Sporting Lisbon)	1
Aleksandar KOLAROV (Manchester City)	1
Filipe LUIS (Chelsea)	1
MAICON (Roma)	1
Eliaquim MANGALA (Manchester City)	1
MARQUINHOS (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Philippe MEXES (Milan)	1
Alberto MORENO (Liverpool)	1
Shkodran MUSTAFI (Valencia)	1
Fernando NAVARRO (Sevilla)	1
Paulo OLIVEIRA (Sporting Lisbon)	1
Manuel PASQUAL (Fiorentina)	1
Karium REFIK (PSV)	1
Winston REID (West Ham United)	1
Gonzalo RODRIGUEZ (Fiorentina)	1
Gregory VAN DER WIEL (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Raphael VARANE (Real Madrid)	1
VIEIRINHA (Wolfsburg)	1
WALLACE (Monaco)	1
WENDELL (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Kurt ZOUMA (Chelsea)	1

MIDFIELDERS

Arjen ROBBEN (Bayern Munich)	39
Cesc FABREGAS (Chelsea)	24
Paul POGBA (Juventus)	22
Kevin DE BRUYNE (Wolfsburg)	20
Eden HAZARD (Chelsea)	14
Toni KROOS (Real Madrid)	13
Xabi ALONSO (Bayern Munich)	12
Antoine GRIEZMANN (Atletico Madrid)	10
ISCO (Real Madrid)	10
Mario GOTZE (Bayern Munich)	9
Yaya TOURE (Manchester City)	9
Nemanja MATIC (Chelsea)	8
Philipp LAHM (Bayern Munich)	7
Marco REUS (Borussia Dortmund)	7
Felipe ANDERSON (Lazio)	6
Philippe COUTINHO (Liverpool)	5
Ivan RAKITIC (Barcelona)	5
James RODRIGUEZ (Real Madrid)	5
Marco VERRATTI (Paris Saint-Germain)	5
Thomas MULLER (Bayern Munich)	4
Radja NAINGGOLAN (Roma)	4
David SILVA (Manchester City)	4
Santi CAZORLA (Arsenal)	3
Angel DI MARIA (Manchester United)	3
Christian ERIKSEN (Tottenham Hotspur)	3
NANI (Sporting Lisbon)	3
Dani PAREJO (Valencia)	3
Andrea PIRLO (Juventus)	3
Miralem PJANIC (Roma)	3
Mohamed SALAH (Fiorentina)	3
Arturo VIDAL (Juventus)	3
ARDA Turan (Atletico Madrid)	2
Gareth BALE (Real Madrid)	2
Yacine BRAHIMI (Porto)	2
Jose Maria CALLEJON (Napoli)	2
Giannelli IMBULA (Marseille)	2
KOKE (Atletico Madrid)	2
Frank LAMPARD (Manchester City)	2
Claudio MARCHISIO (Juventus)	2
Juan MATA (Manchester United)	2
RAFFAEL (Borussia Monchengladbach)	2
Wesley SNEIJDER (Galatasaray)	2
Jeremy TOULALAN (Monaco)	2
Karim BELLARABI (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Sergio BUSQUETS (Barcelona)	1
Denis CHERYSHEV (Villarreal)	1
Marouane FELLAINI (Manchester United)	1
GABI (Atletico Madrid)	1
Steven GERRARD (Liverpool)	1
Maxime GONALONS (Lyon)	1
Yoann GOURCUFF (Lyon)	1
Hector HERRERA (Porto)	1
Geoffrey KONDOGBIA (Monaco)	1
Saul NIGUEZ (Atletico Madrid)	1
Javier PASTORE (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Dimitry PAYET (Marseille)	1
Pablo PIATTI (Valencia)	1
Franck RIBERY (Bayern Munich)	1
TALISCA (Benfica)	1
Granit XHAKA (Borussia Monchengladbach)	1

FORWARDS

Cristiano RONALDO (Real Madrid)	50
Lionel MESSI (Barcelona)	49
Sergio AGUERO (Manchester City)	20
Harry KANE (Tottenham Hotspur)	18
Diego COSTA (Chelsea)	17
Luis SUAREZ (Barcelona)	17
NEYMAR (Barcelona)	15
Bas DOST (Wolfsburg)	13
Carlos TEVEZ (Juventus)	13
Karim BENZEMA (Real Madrid)	8
Alexandre LACAZETTE (Lyon)	8
Graziano PELLE (Southampton)	5
Alexis SANCHEZ (Arsenal)	5
Francesco TOTTI (Roma)	5
Wayne ROONEY (Manchester United)	4
Luiz ADRIANO (Shakhtar Donetsk)	2
Paulo DYBALA (Palermo)	2
Andre-Pierre GIGNAC (Marseille)	2
Alexander MEIER (Eintracht Frankfurt)	2
Alvaro MORATA (Juventus)	2
Diafra SAKHO (West Ham United)	2
Paco ALCACER (Valencia)	1
Tom DE SUTTER (Club Brugge)	1
Eljero ELIA (Southampton)	1
Mauro ICARDI (Internazionale)	1
Jackson MARTINEZ (Porto)	1
Cristian TELLO (Porto)	1
Luca TONI (Verona)	1
Fernando TORRES (Atletico Madrid)	1
Danny WELBECK (Arsenal)	1
Simone ZAZA (Sassuolo)	1

ESM – EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

The members of ESM are: *A Bola* (Portugal), *Elf* (Holland), *Fanatik* (Turkey), *Frankfurter Allegmeine Zeitung* (Germany), *Goal News* (Greece), *Kicker* (Germany), *Marca* (Spain), *Nemzeti Sport* (Hungary), *So Foot* (France), *Sport* (Belgium), *Sport Express* (Russia), *De Telegraaf* (Holland), *TIPSbladet* (Denmark), *World Soccer* (England). More details of votes at **worldsoccer.com/votes**

Internationals

2018 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

ASIA
1st round
2nd leg

Mar 23 - Isa Town, Bahrain
Pakistan 0
Yemen 0
Att: 2,200. **Ref:** Al Qaysi (Irq)
Yemen 3-1 on agg
Pakistan: M Hussain (Hanif 46) - Ahsan Ullah, Bilal, M Ahmed (Muhammad Ali 84), Younas, Mehmood Khan, S Hussain, Riaz, Mansoor Khan (Adil 50), Bashir, K Ullah.
Yemen: Ayash - Al Jarshi, Al Radaei, Boqshan, Qaid, Al Sasi, Al Hifi, Al Khyat (Anbar 81), Al Hagri (Al Hubaishi 90+1), Al Gabr, Al Matari (Hafeedh 90+3).

2nd round draw
Group A: East Timor, Malaysia, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates.
Group B: Australia, Bangladesh, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan.
Group C: Bhutan, China, Hong Kong, Maldives, Qatar.
Group D: Guam, India, Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan.
Group E: Afghanistan, Cambodia, Japan, Singapore, Syria.
Group F: Indonesia, Iraq, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam.
Group G: Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Myanmar, South Korea.
Group H: Bahrain, North Korea, Philippines, Uzbekistan, Yemen.
Matches will be played June 11, 2015 to March 29, 2016

● *Group winners and the 4 runners-up with the best record will qualify for the 3rd round*

CONCACAF
1st round
1st legs

Mar 22 - Bridgetown
Barbados 0
US Virgin Islands 1 (Browne 16)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Ward (StK)
Barbados: Weir - Morris, Manning, Hunte, Browne (Sargeant 81), Holligan, Harris, R Harewood (J Harewood 69), Headley (Prescod 51), Harte, Bailey. *Sent off: Harris 54.*
US Virgin Islands: Mozzo - Harris, George, Dyer, Borden, Maxime Jr, Mathurin (Fuller 68), Massicott (Bailey 58), Good, Browne (Smith 80), Andrew.

Mar 23 - Managua
Nicaragua 5 (Galeano 12, Copete 24, 39, Barrera 36, Lazo 63)
Anguilla 0
HT: 4-0. **Ref:** Perea (Pan)
Nicaragua: Lorente - Quijano, Rosas (Tapia 64), Casco, Franklin Lopez (Leguias 72), Copete (Gutierrez 64), Chavarria, M Lopez, Lazo, Galeano, Barrera.
Anguilla: Liddie - G Connor, Hughes, Hodge (Guishard 66), Austin (R Richardson 57), K Richardson, Brooks, Battice, A Richardson, Prentice, G Rogers.

Mar 23 - Basseterre
St Kitts & Nevis 6 (A Harris 17, T Leader 43, O Mitchum 45, 89, Tishan Hanley 67, O'Loughlin 85)
Turks & Caicos Islands 2 (Forbes 22, T Leader og 72)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Moore (Guy)
St Kitts & Nevis: Archibald - Williams, Robinson, O Mitchum, Robbins (Tishan Hanley 50), Panayiotou (Barnes 90), A Harris, T Leader, Howe, O'Loughlin, Thomas. *Sent off: Howe 27.*
Turks & Caicos Islands: Jones - Rene, Bryan, Delva, Forbes, Magny, Marc Fenelus, Alcide, Aristide (Dorvil 52), Calixte, Marcdonald Fenelus.

Mar 25 - Nassau
Bahamas 0
Bermuda 5 (Leverock 4, Wells pen 14, Lewis 29, Donawa 57, 70)
HT: 0-3. **Ref:** Villarreal (USA)
Bahamas: Whylly - Sealey, Moss, Hall, Sheehan (Jean 30), Pritchard, St Fleur, Hepple, Wood (Delancy 75), Beneby, Winder (Larson 56).
Sent off: Hall 43.
Bermuda: Hall - Bather, T Burgess, Harvey (Raynor 76), Ming (K Bean 66), Bascome, Lewis, Simons (J Smith 60), Leverock, Donawa, Wells.

Mar 25 - Belmopan
Belize 0
Cayman Islands 0
Ref: Reyna (Gtm)
Belize: W West - Smith, Gaynair, Eiley, Lennan, A Makin, D Torres (Thomas 70), Rochez, Jimenez, Kuylen (Guerra 53), Davis.
Cayman Islands: Sealy - Jason Ebanks, Cupid, Rivers, W Robinson, Jedd Ebanks, Andres Ruiz, Alejandro Ruiz, M Ebanks (Webb 46), R Robinson (Suberan 74), Jessus Ebanks (Sanchez 77).

Mar 26 - Roseau, Dominica[1]
British Virgin Islands 2 (E Moss 41, Johnson 53)
Dominica 3 (Elizee 45, Mitchell Joseph 64, Peltier 81)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Tyrell (Jam)
British Virgin Islands: Barker - Davis, G James, Dicker, Monks, Bell, Johnson, E Moss, M Moss, Telemaque, Espley.
Dominica: G Prince - A Lawrence, H Prince, Malcolm Joseph, C Bertrand (J Prince 85), Elizee (Peltier 60), Thomas, K Lawrence, Lockhart, Mitchell Joseph (S Phillip 90+2), Wade.
[1]British Virgin Islands played 'home' leg in Dominica because they do not have a stadium of suitable standard

Mar 27 - Willemstad
Curacao 2 (Merencia 8, Zschusschen pen 39)
Montserrat 1 (Taylor 24)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Davila (Nic)
Curacao: De la Paz - Mulder (Carmelia 87), Lachman, C Martina, Wall, Hoyer, Merencia (M Maria 65), Meulens, Nepomuceno, G Maria (Regales 87), Zschusschen.
Montserrat: Brooks-Meade - Petrie, Williams, M Farrell (McIntosh-Buffonge 88), Griffith, Comley, Henry, A Dyer, McDonald, Morgan (Weir-Daley 77), Taylor.

2nd legs

Mar 26 - Providenciales
Turks & Caicos Islands 2 (Calixte pen 4, pen 14)
St Kitts & Nevis 6 (J Leader 7, 30, Panayiotou pen 33, 55, 60, Robbins 73)
HT: 2-3. **Ref:** Bonilla (ESv)
St Kitts & Nevis 12-4 on agg
Turks & Caicos Islands: Azemard - Marcdonald Fenelus, Delva (Dorvil 71), Forbes, Rene, Derilien (Singh 45), Calixte (Hassan 84), Aristide, Bryan, Magny, Marc Fenelus.
St Kitts & Nevis: Archibald (Jamal Francis 77) - K Mitchum, T Leader, Walwyn, Williams, Sawyers, O Mitchum, O'Loughlin, J Leader, Thomas (Phillip 74), Panayiotou (Robbins 70).

Mar 26 - Charlotte Amalie
US Virgin Islands 0
Barbados 4 (Sargeant 4, Jamal Chandler 25, Harte 76, Jabarry Chandler 90)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 300. **Ref:** Morrison (Jam)
Barbados 4-1 on agg
US Virgin Islands: Mozzo - Dyer, Harris (Fuller 59), Andrew, George, Borden (Smith 33), D Thomas, Browne, Good, Mathurin (Laurencin 33), Maxime Jr.
Barbados: Weir - Boyce, Manning, Morris, Bailey, Sargeant (R Harewood 80), Hunte, Holligan (Prescod 72), Harte (Jabarry Chandler 90), Jamal Chandler, Browne.

Mar 29 - The Valley
Anguilla 0
Nicaragua 3 (Leguias 21, 67, Barrera 45+1)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Moncada (Hnd)
Nicaragua 8-0 on agg
Anguilla: Liddie - A Richardson, K Richardson, Hughes, Prentice, G Connor, Brooks (Brooks-Belle 70), R Richardson (A Rogers 76), G Rogers, Battice, Guishard (Hodge 60).
Nicaragua: Lorente - Copete, Quijano, Rosas, Casco, Peralta, Barrera, Franklin Lopez, Pinel (Cuadra 70), Chavarria (D Reyes 78), Leguias (Galeano 87).

Mar 29 - Hamilton
Bermuda 3 (Wells 80, 87, T Burgess 82)
Bahamas 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Montero (CR)
Bermuda 8-0 on agg
Bermuda: Hall (Eve 46) - T Burgess, Leverock, Bather, Harvey, Lambe, Lewis, K Bean (Simmons 84), Bascome, Donawa (J Smith 35), Wells.
Bahamas: Whylly (Carroll 84) - Collie, Williamson, Moss, Pritchard, Delancy, Larson, Sheehan, Brookes, Wood (Godet 64), Winder (Munroe 46).

Mar 29 - George Town
Cayman Islands 1 (M Ebanks 5)
Belize 1 (Kuylen 20)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Martinez (Cub)
Agg 1-1; Belize on away goals
Cayman Islands: Sealy - Cupid, Rivers, Jason Ebanks, W Robinson, Jedd Ebanks, Andres Ruiz, Alejandro Ruiz (Sanchez 60), M Ebanks, R Robinson (Suberan 55), Jessus Ebanks (Whitelock 83).
Belize: W West - Smith, Gaynair, Eiley, Lennan, Casey, Guerra (Velasquez 90+2), Rochez (A Makin 63), Jimenez, Kuylen (Polanco 90+3), Davis.

Mar 29 - Roseau
Dominica 0
British Virgin Islands 0
Ref: Guerrero (Mex)
Dominica 3-2 on agg
Dominica: G Prince - A Lawrence, H Prince, Malcolm Joseph, C Bertrand, Elizee, Thomas, K Lawrence, Lockhart, Mitchell Joseph (Peltier 55), Wade.
British Virgin Islands: Barker - Davis, Dicker, Monks, Bell, Johnson, Shearman (M Moss 68), E Moss, Telemaque, Peters, Espley.

Mar 31 - St John's
Montserrat 2 (Willer 65, Woods-Garness 81)
Curacao 2 (Lachman 42, Vicento 87)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Harris (T&T)
Curacao 4-3 on agg
Montserrat: Brooks-Meade - M Farrell (Clifton 80), Petrie, Williams, Griffith, Comley, Henry (Willer 61), J Dyer, McDonald, Weir-Daley (Woods-Garness 70), Taylor.
Curacao: De la Paz - Mulder, Martis (Wall 52), R Martina, Lachman (Vicento 86), Hoyer, Merencia (Carmelia 76), Meulens, Nepomuceno, G Maria, Zschusschen.

2nd round draw
Antigua & Barbuda v St Lucia
Aruba v Barbados
Curacao v Cuba
Dominica v Canada
Dominican Republic v Belize
Guatemala v Bermuda
Nicaragua v Surinam
Puerto Rico v Grenada
St Kitts & Nevis v El Salvador
St Vincent & The Grenadines v Guyana
1st legs - June 7-12, 2015;
2nd legs - June 14-16, 2015

Byes to 3rd round: *Haiti, Jamaica.*
Byes to 4th round: *Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Trinidad & Tobago, United States.*

EURO 2016 QUALIFIERS

Group A

Mar 28 - Prague
Czech Republic 1 (Pilar 90)
Latvia 1 (A Visnakovs 30)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 13,722. **Ref:** Estrada (Spa)
Czech Republic: Cech - Gebre Selassie, Prochazka, M Kadlec, Limbersky, Darida, Plasil (Pilar 46), Dockal, Rosicky, Krejci (Necid 57), Lafata (V Kadlec 81).
Latvia: Vanins - Freimanis, Dubra, Gorkss, Maksimenko, Rakels, Tarasovs, Zjuzins (Zigajevs 87), Laizans (Ikaunieks 66), A Visnakovs (Fertovs 82), Sabala.

Mar 28 - Amsterdam
Holland 1 (Huntelaar 90+2)
Turkey 1 (Burak 37)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 49,500. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Holland: Cillessen - Van der Wiel, De Vrij, Martins Indi (Willems 77), Blind, Wijnaldum (Narsingh 46), N De Jong (Dost 63), Sneijder, Afellay, Huntelaar, Depay.
Turkey: Volkan Babacan - Hakan Balta, Serdar (Gulum 69), Gokhan Gonul, Ozan, Selcuk Inan, Gokhan Tore, Volkan Sen (Calhanoglu 61), Mehmet Topal, Caner, Burak (Kazim-Richards 79).

Mar 28 - Astana
Kazakhstan 0
Iceland 3 (Gudjohnsen 20, B Bjarnason 32, 90+1)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 13,182. **Ref:** Sidiropoulos (Gre)
Kazakhstan: Sidelnikov - Gurman (Kuantayev 67), Vorotnikov, Abdulin (Schetkin 80), Logvinenko, Suyumbayev, Islamkhan, Tagybergen, Smakov, Nurgaliyev (Konysbayev 56), Tazhimbetov.
Iceland: Halldorsson - B Saevarsson, Arnason, R Sigurdsson, A Skulason, B Bjarnason, A Gunnarsson (Hallfredsson 72), G Sigurdsson, J Gudmundsson, Gudjohnsen (Finnbogason 83), Sigthorsson (Bodvarsson 70).

EURO 2016 QUALIFIERS – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Czech Rep	5	4	1	0	11	6	13
Iceland	5	4	0	1	12	2	12
Holland	5	2	1	2	11	6	7
Turkey	5	1	2	2	6	8	5
Latvia	5	0	3	2	2	11	3
Kazakhstan	5	0	1	4	4	13	1

Group B

Mar 28 - Andorra La Vella
Andorra 0
Bosnia-Herzegovina 3 (Dzeko 13, 49, 62)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,498. **Ref:** Vad (Hun)
Andorra: Pol - San Nicolas, Vales, Lima, M Garcia, Sonejee, M Vieira, Clemente (C Martinez 54), Rodriguez, Lorenzo (Rubio 85), Gomez (Riera 59).
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Begovic - Mujdza, Spahic, Vranjes (Cocalic 73), Zukanovic, Visca, Besic, Pjanic, Lulic (Medunjanin 77), Ibisevic (Djuric 67), Dzeko.

Mar 28 - Brussels
Belgium 5 (Fellaini 21, 66, Benteke 35, E Hazard 67, Batshuayi 80)
Cyprus 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 45,213. **Ref:** Hategan (Rom)
Belgium: Courtois - Alderweireld, Kompany, Lombaerts, Vertonghen, Nainggolan, Witsel, Fellaini (Ferreira Carrasco 69), De Bruyne, Benteke (Batshuayi 77), E Hazard (Mertens 69).
Cyprus: Kissas - Kyriakou, Merkis, Laifis, Antoniades, Makris (Eleftheriou 71), Nikolaou, Makrides (Kastanos 84), Laban (Economides 57), Sotiriou, Mytidis.

Mar 28 - Haifa
Israel 0
Wales 3 (Ramsey 45+1, Bale 50, 77)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 30,200. **Ref:** Mazic (Ser)
Israel: Marciano - Dgani, Tibi, Tal Ben Haim/D, Ben Harush, Natcho, Yeini, Zahavi (Sahar 70), Refaelov, Damari (Hemed 43), Tal Ben Haim/F (Biton 60). *Sent off: Tibi 51.*
Wales: Hennessey - Gunter, J Collins, B Davies, A Williams, N Taylor, Allen, Ledley (Vaughan 47), Ramsey (MacDonald 85), Bale, Robson-Kanu (Vokes 68).

Mar 31 - Jerusalem
Israel 0
Belgium 1 (Fellaini 9)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Clattenburg (Eng)
Israel: Marciano - Dgani, Tal Ben Haim/D, Gershon, Ben Harush (Barda 84), Yeini (Refaelov 66), Biton, Natcho, Zahavi, Hemed (Tal Ben Haim/F 46), Sahar.
Belgium: Courtois - Alderweireld, Kompany, Lombaerts, Vertonghen, Fellaini, Nainggolan (Origi 86), Witsel, De Bruyne, Benteke (Denayer 66), E Hazard (Chadli 63). *Sent off: Kompany 64.*

EURO 2016 QUALIFIERS – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Belgium	5	3	2	0	13	1	11
Wales	5	3	2	0	7	2	11
Israel	5	3	0	2	9	6	9
Cyprus	5	2	0	3	9	10	6
Bosnia-Herz	5	1	2	2	5	6	5
Andorra	5	0	0	5	2	20	0

Group C

Mar 27 - Skopje
Macedonia 1 (Trajkovski 9)
Belarus 2 (Kalachev 44, Kornilenko 82)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 3,447. **Ref:** Taylor (Eng)
Macedonia: Pacovski - Ristovski, Sikov, B Markoski, Georgievski, A Ibraimi, Hasani, Polozani (Bardi 31), Trajkovski, K Velkoski (Todorovski 63), Abdurahimi (Blazevski 75).
Belarus: Zhevnov - Shitov, Martynovich, Filipenko, Bordachev, Maewski (Putsilo 80), Kalachev, A Hleb (Dragun 87), Kislyak, Stasevich (Nekhaychik 90+3), Kornilenko.

Mar 27 - Zilina
Slovakia 3 (Nemec 10, Weiss 21, Pekarik 40)
Luxembourg 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 9,524. **Ref:** Studer (Swi)
Slovakia: Kozacik - Pekarik, Skrtel, Durica, Hubocan, Weiss (Mak 71), Pecovsky, Hamsik, Kucka (Hrosovsky 59), Stoch (Sestak 80), Nemec.
Luxembourg: Joubert - Jans, Schnell, Chanot, Mutsch, Bensi (Laterza 78), Gerson, Holter (Da Mota 51), Philipps, Deville (Payal 64), Joachim.

Mar 27 - Seville
Spain 1 (Morata 28)
Ukraine 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 33,775. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)
Spain: Casillas - Juanfran, Pique, Sergio Ramos, Jordi Alba (Bernat 78), Busquets, Silva, Koke, Iniesta (Cazorla 74), Isco, Morata (Pedro 65).
Ukraine: Pyatov - Fedetskyi, Khacheridi, Kucher, Shevchuk, Tymoshchuk, Stepanenko (Harmash 76), Konoplyanka, Rotan, Yarmolenko, Zozulya (Kravets 32; Budkivskyi 90+1).

EURO 2016 QUALIFIERS – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slovakia	5	5	0	0	11	2	15
Spain	5	4	0	1	14	3	12
Ukraine	5	3	0	2	6	2	9
Belarus	5	1	1	3	4	10	4
Macedonia	5	1	0	4	5	12	3
Luxembourg	5	0	1	4	3	14	1

Group D

Mar 29 - Tbilisi
Georgia 0
Germany 2 (Reus 39, Muller 44)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 51,000. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)
Georgia: Loria - Lobzhanidze, Kvirkvelia, Amisulashvili (Dvali 4), Kashia, Navalovski, Kankava, Makharadze (Kenia 63), Kobakhidze, Mchedlidze, Okriashvili (Chanturia 46).
Germany: Neuer - Rudy, Boateng, Hummels, Hector, Schweinsteiger, Kroos, Muller (Schurrle 86), Ozil, Reus, Gotze (Podolski 87).

Mar 29 - Dublin
Republic of Ireland 1 (Long 90+1)
Poland 1 (Peszko 26)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 50,500. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)
Rep Ireland: Given - Coleman, O'Shea, Wilson, Brady, Hoolahan, Whelan (Long 84), McCarthy, McGeady (McClean 68), Keane, Walters.
Poland: Fabianski - Olkowski, Szukala, Glik, Wawrzyniak, Peszko (Kucharczyk 88), Krychowiak, Jodlowiec, Rybus, R Lewandowski, Milik (Mila 84).

Mar 29 - Glasgow
Scotland 6 (Maloney pen 18, pen 34, S Fletcher 29, 77, 90, Naismith 39)
Gibraltar 1 (L Casciaro 19)
HT: 4-1. **Att:** 34,255. **Ref:** Gestranius (Fin)
Scotland: Marshall - R Martin, Hutton, Robertson, Anya (Bannan 74), Brown, Morrison, Maloney, Ritchie (Greer 46), Naismith (Rhodes 67), S Fletcher.
Gibraltar: Robba - Wiseman, Artell (Garcia 53), R Casciaro, J Chipolina, Payas, R Chipolina (Gosling 74), Bardon (D Duarte 82), Walker, L Casciaro, Priestley.

EURO 2016 QUALIFIERS – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Poland	5	3	2	0	16	3	11
Germany	5	3	1	1	9	4	10
Scotland	5	3	1	1	11	5	10
Rep Ireland	5	2	2	1	11	4	8
Georgia	5	1	0	4	4	9	3
Gibraltar	5	0	0	5	1	27	0

Group E

Mar 27 - London
England 4 (Rooney 6, Welbeck 45, Sterling 58, Kane 73)
Lithuania 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 83,671. **Ref:** Kralovec (CzR)
England: Hart - Clyne, Cahill, Jones, Baines, Delph, Carrick, Henderson (Barkley 71), Sterling, Rooney (Kane 71), Welbeck (Walcott 77).
Lithuania: Arlauskis - Zaliukas, Kijanskas, Freidgeimas, Andriuskevicius (Slavickas 83), Mikoliunas (Kazlauskas 88), Chvedukas, Mikuckis (S Stankevicius 66), Cernych, Zulpa, Matulevicius.

Mar 27 - Ljubljana
Slovenia 6 (Ilicic 10, Kampl 49, Struna 50, Novakovic 52, Lazarevic 73, Ilic 88)
San Marino 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,325. **Ref:** Drachta (Aut)
Slovenia: S Handanovic - Brecko (Stojanovic 76), Ilic, Cesar, Struna, Kurtic, Birsa, Kampl, Kirm (Lazarevic 60), Ilicic (Beric 72), Novakovic.
San Marino: Benedettini - Bonini, Brolli, D Simoncini, Alessandro Della Valle (F Vitaioli 78), Palazzi, Hirsch (A Golinucci 84), Mazza, Tosi (Battistini 56), M Vitaioli, Selva.

Mar 27 - Lucerne
Switzerland 3 (Schar 17, Xhaka 27, Seferovic 80)
Estonia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 14,500. **Ref:** Makkelie (Hol)
Switzerland: Sommer - Lichtsteiner (Widmer 78), Schar, Djourou, Rodriguez, Behrami, Inler, Xhaka (Frei 87), Shaqiri, Seferovic, Drmic (Stocker 62).
Estonia: Pareiko - Teniste, Jaager, Klavan, Kallaste, Vassiljev, Dmitrijev (Kruglov 63), Mets, Antonov, Zenjov (Alliku 87), H Anier (Ojamaa 56).

EURO 2016 QUALIFIERS – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	5	5	0	0	15	1	15
Slovenia	5	3	0	2	10	4	9
Switzerland	5	3	0	2	11	3	9
Lithuania	5	2	0	3	3	10	6
Estonia	5	1	1	3	1	5	4
San Marino	5	0	1	4	0	17	1

Group F

Mar 29 - Budapest
Hungary 0
Greece 0
Att: 22,000. **Ref:** Karasev (Rus)
Hungary: Kiraly - Fiola, Juhasz, Kadar, Leandro, Elek (Pinter 70), Tozser, Stieber, Gera, Dzsudzsak, Szalai (Nikolic 68).
Greece: Karnezis - Papastathopoulos, Manolas, Torosidis, Stafylidis, K Papadopoulos, Samaris, Fetfatzidis (Gianniotas 77), Kone (Katsouranis 77), Christodoulopoulos (Fortounis 69), Athanasiadis.

Mar 29 - Belfast
Northern Ireland 2 (K Lafferty 33, 38)
Finland 1 (Sadik 90+1)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 10,264. **Ref:** Marciniak (Pol)
Northern Ireland: Carroll - C McLaughlin, J Evans, McAuley, Brunt, Davis (C Evans 46), Baird, Norwood, McGinn (Dallas 64), K Lafferty (Magennis 79), Ward.
Finland: Hradecky - Sorsa, Toivio (Arajuuri 46), Moisander, Uronen, Ring, Hamalainen (Pohjanpalo 43), Sparv, R Eremenko, Mattila, Pukki (Sadik 70).

Mar 29 - Ploiesti
Romania 1 (Keseru 21)
Faroe Islands 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 13,898. **Ref:** Dias (Por)
Romania: Pantilimon - Papp, Chiriches, D Grigore, Rat, Pintilii, Sanmartean (Prepelita 86), Popa (Torje 71), Rusescu (Tanase 60), Maxim, Keseru.
Faroe Islands: Nielsen - J Davidsen, Nattestad, Gregersen, V Davidsen, Faero (A Olsen 74), Holst, B Olsen (Sorensen 80), R Jacobsen (R Joensen 80), Vatnhamar, Edmundsson.

EURO 2016 QUALIFIERS – GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Romania	5	4	1	0	7	1	13
N Ireland	5	4	0	1	8	4	12
Hungary	5	2	2	1	4	3	8
Finland	5	1	1	3	5	7	4
Faroe Islands	5	1	0	4	2	7	3
Greece	5	0	2	3	1	5	2

Group G

Mar 27 - Vaduz
Liechtenstein 0
Austria 5 (Harnik 14, Janko 16, Alaba 59, Junuzovic 74, Arnautovic 90+3)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 5,864. **Ref:** Zwayer (Ger)
Liechtenstein: Jehle - Quintans (Salanovic 55), Frick, Kaufmann, Oehri, A Christen (Kuhne 83), M Buchel (Gubser 88), Polverino, Wieser, Burgmeier, N Hasler.
Austria: Almer - Klein, Dragovic, Hinteregger, Fuchs, Harnik (Sabitzer 72), Baumgartlinger, Alaba, Arnautovic, Junuzovic (Hinterseer 82), Janko (Djuricin 77).

Mar 27 - Chisinau
Moldova 0
Sweden 2 (Ibrahimovic 46, pen 84)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,375. **Ref:** Bebek (Cro)
Moldova: Cebanu - Racu, Golovatenco, Epureanu, Armas, Bolohan, Gatcan, G Andronic (Frunza 70), Ionita (Cojocari 36), Dedov, Boghiu (Gheorghiev 86).
Sweden: Isaksson - P Bengtsson, Granqvist, E Johansson, M Olsson, S Larsson (Forsberg 80), Kallstrom, Ekdal, Zengin (Wernbloom 85), Kiese Thelin (Berg 70), Ibrahimovic.
Sent off: Granqvist 90+3.

Mar 27 - Podgorica
Montenegro 0
Russia 3 (awarded)
Match abandoned in 67th minute (with the score at 0-0) after missiles were thrown from the crowd and scuffles between players
Att: 12,000. **Ref:** Aytekin (Ger)
Montenegro: Poleksic - Simic, Basa, Volkov, Vucinic, Kascelan, Zverotic, N Vukcevic, Marusic, Balic (Bakic 46), Jovetic.
Russia: Akinfeev (Lodygin 2) - Smolnikov, V Berezutsky, Ignashevich, Kombarov, Denisov, Dzagoev (Torbinskiy 46), Shirokov, Shatov, Zhirkov, Kokorin.

EURO 2016 QUALIFIERS – GROUP G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Austria	5	4	1	0	10	2	13
Sweden	5	2	3	0	7	3	9
Russia	5	2	2	1	9	3	8
Montenegro	5	1	2	2	3	5	5
Liechtenstein	5	1	1	3	1	11	4
Moldova	5	0	1	4	2	8	1

Group H

Mar 28 - Baku
Azerbaijan 2 (C Huseynov 4, Nazarov 90+2)
Malta 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 14,600. **Ref:** Ozkahya (Tur)
Azerbaijan: K Agayev - Medvedev, B Huseynov, R F Sadygov, Dashdemirov, Qarayev, Alaskarov (R Gurbanov 22), Amirguliyev, C Huseynov, Ismayilov (Nazarov 70), Nadirov (Israfilov 81).
Malta: Hogg - J Caruana, Camilleri (Z Muscat 36), A Agius, Bezzina (S Pisani 46), P Fenech, S Borg, Schembri (R Fenech 81), R Muscat, Briffa, Effiong.

Mar 28 - Sofia
Bulgaria 2 (I Popov 11, Mitsanski 17)
Italy 2 (Y Minev og 4, Eder 84)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 10,359. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)
Bulgaria: Mihaylov - Manolev, Bodurov, A Aleksandrov, Y Minev, Gadzhev, Dyakov, G Milanov (V Vasilev 88), I Popov (Slavchev 85), M Aleksandrov, Mitsanski (Bozhinov 73).
Italy: Sirigu - Barzagli, Bonucci, Chiellini, Antonelli (Gabbiadini 77), Candreva, Verratti, Bertolacci (Soriano 72), Darmian, Zaza (Eder 58), Immobile.

Mar 28 - Zagreb
Croatia 5 (Brozovic 30, Perisic 53, Olic 65, Schildenfeld 87, Pranjic 90+4)
Norway 1 (Tettey 80)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 23,920. **Ref:** Velasco Carballo (Spa)
Croatia: Subasic - Srna, Corluka, Vida, Pranjic, Brozovic, Modric, Perisic, Rakitic (Schildenfeld 75), Olic (Kramaric 70), Mandzukic (Badelj 87).
Sent off: Corluka 74.
Norway: Nyland - Hogli, Forren, Nordtveit, Linnes, Skjelbred (Samuelsen 19), Johansen, Tettey, Daehli (Nielsen 61), T Elyounoussi (Abdellaoue 79), Odegaard.

EURO 2016 QUALIFIERS – GROUP H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	5	4	1	0	15	2	13
Italy	5	3	2	0	8	4	11
Norway	5	3	0	2	7	8	9
Bulgaria	5	1	2	2	6	7	5
Azerbaijan	5	1	0	4	4	11	3
Malta	5	0	1	4	1	9	1

Group I

Mar 29 - Elbasan
Albania 2 (Mavraj 77, Gashi 81)
Armenia 1 (Mavraj og 4)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 12,300. **Ref:** Fernandez Borbalan (Spa)
Albania: Berisha - Hysaj, Cana, Mavraj, Agolli, Xhaka, Kukeli, Roshi (Salihi 69), Abrashi (Lenjani 46), Cikalleshi, Memushaj (Gashi 46).
Armenia: Berezovsky - Hambartsumyan, Arzumanyan, Andonyan, Hayrapetyan, Manucharyan (Hovhannisyan 67), Mkhitaryan, Artur Yedigaryan (Korian 84), Pizzelli, Ghazaryan, Movsisyan. *Sent off: Hambartsumyan 70.*

Mar 29 - Lisbon
Portugal 2 (Ricardo Carvalho 10, Fabio Coentrao 63)
Serbia 1 (Matic 61)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 58,430. **Ref:** Rocchi (Ita)
Portugal: Rui Patricio - Bosingwa, Bruno Alves, Ricardo Carvalho (Fonte 17), Eliseu, Joao Moutinho, Tiago, Fabio Coentrao (Quaresma 78), Nani, Danny (William Carvalho 86), Cristiano Ronaldo.
Serbia: Stojkovic - Basta, Ivanovic, Nastasic, Kolarov, Petrovic, Matic, L Markovic (Djuricic 65), Ljajic (Skuletic 85), Tadic (Z Tosic 78), A Mitrovic.

EURO 2016 QUALIFIERS – GROUP I

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portugal	4	3	0	1	4	2	9
Denmark	4	2	1	1	6	4	7
Albania[1]	4	2	1	1	4	5	7
Serbia[1]	4	1	1	2	6	6	1
Armenia	4	0	1	3	3	6	1

[1]The abandoned Serbia v Albania game on Oct 14 was awarded as a 3-0 win to Serbia, but Serbia also had 3pts deducted

● *Top 2 in each group and the 3rd-placed team with the best record[1] will qualify directly for the finals; the other 3rd-placed teams will be paired in 4 head-to-head, 2-leg ties, the winners of which will also qualify for the 24-team finals. Hosts France qualify automatically*
[1]Determined by results against the teams finishing 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th in the respective groups

2015 GOLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Play-off match

1st leg

Mar 25 - Cayenne
French Guiana 3 (Torvic 26, Privat 27, 62)
Honduras 1 (Bengtson 18)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 3,500. **Ref:** Ramos (Mex)
French Guiana: Leon - Marigard, Torvic, Lescot, Legrand, Contout, Loic Baal, Ludovic Baal, Saint-Clair, Adipi (Evens 51), Privat (Gary Pigree 85).
Honduras: Valladares - Izaguirre, H Figueroa, M Figueroa, Crisanto (Beckeles 46), Garrido, Espinoza (Najar 65), M Martinez, A Peralta, Lozano, Bengtson (Hernandez 65).

2nd leg

Mar 29 - San Pedro Sula
Honduras 3 (Najar 30, 32, Lozano 45)
French Guiana 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Geiger (USA)
Honduras 4-3 on agg; qualify for Gold Cup finals
Honduras: Escober - Crisanto, H Figueroa, M Figueroa, Izaguirre, Garrido, O Garcia, Najar (A Peralta 63), M Martinez, Bengtson (Castillo 58), Lozano (Hernandez 84).
French Guiana: Apagui - Marigard, Legrand, Evens (Martison 73), Torvic, Lesperance, Contout, Adipi, Lescot (Gary Pigree 46), Saint-Clair, Loic Baal.

FRIENDLIES

Sunday, March 22

Mar 22 - St John's
Antigua & Barbuda 1 (Hazelwood 4)
British Virgin Islands 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Taylor (Bar)
Antigua & Barbuda: Lockhart - Jamarlie Stevens (Phillip 73), A Thomas (Mack 89), Jamoy Stevens, Jamal Stevens (Constant 64), Kirwan (Henry 81), Robinson, T Thomas, Hazelwood (Christian 60), Javorn Stevens (Smith 70), T Harriette.
British Virgin Islands: Barker (Vesquever Frett 90) - G James, M Moss, Dicker, Vanquever Frett, Davis, Burke (Felix 77), Shearman, Monks, A Williams (Morton 87), Johnson.

Mar 22 - Providence
Guyana 2 (Alleyne 34, Holder 49)
St Lucia 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Harris (T&T)
Guyana: Clarke - Smith, Nelson, Brown (White 87), Camacho, Nurse, Beresford (Mannings 78), Mills (D Jacobs 46), Alleyne (Nobrega 74), Holder (Welshman 68), Wilson (Junior 80).
St Lucia: Poleon - Paul, Gabriel, P-J Joseph, Emmanuel, Hunte, L Joseph, St Prix, Felix, Z Polius, Charles.

Wednesday, March 25

Mar 25 - Aarhus
Denmark 3 (Bendtner 33, 83, 90+1)
United States 2 (Altidore 19, Johannsson 66)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,505. **Ref:** Gestranius (Fin)
Denmark: S Andersen - Wass, Kjaer, Sviatchenko, Boilesen (S Poulsen 53), Kvist (Christiansen 46), J Poulsen (Delaney 46), Vibe (Braithwaite 74), Eriksen, Krohn-Dehli (Schone 78), Bendtner.
United States: Rimando - Chandler, Orozco (Alvarado 80), Brooks, Garza, Zardes (Yedlin 67), Bedoya (Morales 46), Bradley, F Johnson (Shea 46), Altidore, Johannsson (Rubin 67).

Mar 25 - Santiago de los Caballeros
Dominican Republic 0
Cuba 3 (Y Marquez 9, Santa Cruz 19, M Reyes 27)
HT: 0-3

Cuba: D Guerra - Vaquero, Malblanche, Diz Pe (Lopez 72), Corrales (Dranguet 81), Y Marquez (Clavelo 69), Collado (F Guerra 84), A Martinez, A Hernandez, M Reyes (Puga 77), Santa Cruz (Cruz 77).

Mar 25 - Beauvais, France
Gabon 4 (Evouna 35, Aubameyang pen 63, 65, Ecuele Manga 90)
Mali 3 (D Diakite 6, Wague 57, Sako 82)
HT: 1-1
Gabon: Ovono (Mfa Mezui 69) - Obiang, Ecuele Manga, Appindangoye, Palun, Biyogo Poko, Kanga, Engonga (Ndong 63), Aubameyang, Evouna (Lengoualama 79), Bulot.
Mali: Samassa - Tamboura, K Traore, Wague, D Diakite, Doumbia (C Diarra 81), Abdou Traore, S Sow (Y Sylla 46), S Yatabare (Adama Traore 81), Dembele (Sako 46), Marega (M Maiga 73).

Mar 25 - Tbilisi
Georgia 2 (Kankava 83, Kazaishvili 90+2)
Malta 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Anufrijevs (Lat)
Georgia: Loria (Revishvili 46) - Amisulashvili, Navalovski, Kashia, Kvirkvelia (Kenia 46), Kobakhidze (Dzalamidze 84), Kankava, Okriashvili (Vatsadze 71), Makharadze, Mchedlidze (Tskhadadze 71), Chanturia (Kazaishvili 64).
Malta: Haber - J Caruana, Bezzina, A Agius, Camilleri (Z Muscat 46), S Borg (Camenzuli 89), Cohen, J P Farrugia (Effiong 60), Kristensen (Scerri 71), Schembri, R Muscat.

Mar 25 - Kaiserslautern
Germany 2 (Reus 17, Podolski 81)
Australia 2 (Troisi 40, Jedinak 50)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 47,106. **Ref:** Oliver (Eng)
Germany: Zieler - Mustafi, Howedes, Badstuber (Rudy 46), Khedira (Kramer 63), Bellarabi (Schurrle 63), Ozil, Gundogan, Hector, Reus (Podolski 73), Gotze (Kruse 73).
Australia: Ryan - Franjic, Wilkinson (Wright 77), DeVere, Davidson, Milligan (Mooy 69), Jedinak, McKay (Bozanic 77), Burns (Oar 61), Leckie, Troisi (Juric 87).

Mar 25 - Sidoarjo
Indonesia 0
Cameroon 1 (Aboubakar 36)
HT: 0-1
Indonesia: Wirawan - Alfarizi, Igbonefo, Tjoe (Aryanto 46), Kipuw (Sucipto 87), Sukadana (Maitimo 68), Hariono (Jufriyanto 74), Tantan (Bayu Gatra 68), Zulham Zamrun, Solossa, Gonzales (Sinaga 66).
Cameroon: Ondoa - Bedimo, Oyongo (Guihoata 80), Chedjou, Ndassi, Enoh, Loe, Moukandjo (Mandjang 65), Ndi (Abep 76), Aboubakar, Kweuke (Etoundi 25).

Mar 25 - Curepipe
Mauritius 2 (Sophie 9, Ravina 23)
Burundi 2 (Ntibazonkisa pen 17, 77)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Chutooree (Mrs)
Mauritius: Casernes - Citorah, Ravina, Vincent, Veeranah, Fabrice Pithia, L'Enclume, Buckland, Coco (Fabien Pithia 61), Sophie (Curpanen 79), Justin (Nazira 73).
Burundi: Arakaza - Niizigiyimana, Nsabiyumva, Rugonumugabo, Kwizera, Duhayindavyi (Sabumukama 61), Ndayisenga (Y Ndikumana 85), Nimubona, Papy, Ntigamagabo, Ntibazonkisa.

Mar 25 - Uyo
Nigeria 0
Uganda 1 (Miya 81)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Agbovi (Gha)
Nigeria: Enyeama - Balogun (Oboabona 77), Ogbonnaya, Omeruo, Akas (Latifu 59), Ukoh (Aluko 65), Onazi, Akpan, Musa (Udoh 90), Ighalo (Olanare 85), Ujah (Simon 59).
Uganda: Onyango - Nsubuga, Kasagga, Walusimbi (Ssentongo 58), Bakaki, Miya (Kiyemba 89), L Kizito (Ntambi 90+4), Kakuba, Aucho, Tekwwo (K Kizito 58), G Massa.

Mar 25 - Glasgow
Scotland 1 (Berra 86)
Northern Ireland 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Scotland: Gordon (McGregor 46) - Whittaker (Russell 79), R Martin (Berra 46), Greer, Forsyth, McArthur (Morrison 63), D Fletcher, Ritchie, Maloney (Naismith 46), Anya, S Fletcher (Rhodes 63).
Northern Ireland: McGovern - McNair, Hughes, J Evans (McCullough 81), D Lafferty, Baird (Hodson 59), Norwood (Davis 70), Magennis (McKay 75), Reeves (R McLaughlin 70), Dallas, Grigg (McCourt 59).

Mar 25 - Lobamba
Swaziland 1 (Badenhorst 65)
South Africa 3 (Hlatshwayo 51, Mnyamane 52, Masango 86)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Chirinda (Moz)
Swaziland: Mphikeleli Dlamini - Mabila, Mkhweli, Machawe Dlamini, Mdluli (Nkambule 59), Lukhele (Nxumalo 87), Badenhorst, Ndlovu, Tsabedze, Sibandze, P Dlamini.
South Africa: Khune (Mabokgwane 46) - Hlatshwayo, Matlaba, Cardoso, Alexander (Zungu 83), Patosi (Masango 55), Morena, Mokotjo (Phiri 71), Serero (Shongwe 54), Majoro (Ntshangase 46), Mnyamane.

Thursday, March 26

Mar 26 - Riffa
Bahrain 0
Colombia 6 (Bacca 14, Falcao 32, 35, Ramos 58, Mojica 78, Renteria 81)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Al Hoish (Sau)
Colombia: Ospina - Bocanegra, Franco, Murillo (Guarin 46), Andrade, Aguilar (Medina 75), Sanchez, J Quintero (Mojica 62), Juan Cuadrado (Cardona 82), Falcao (Renteria 71), Bacca (Ramos 46).

Mar 26 - San Jose
Costa Rica 0
Paraguay 0
Ref: Pitti (Pan)
Costa Rica: Navas - Myrie, Duarte, Diaz, Francis, Tejeda (Guzman 83), Borges, B Ruiz, J Ruiz (Venegas 46), Campbell (Vega 81), Saborio (Urena 59).
Paraguay: Villar - M Caceres, Da Silva, Aguilar, Samudio, Molinas (Oviedo 67), V Caceres, R Ortiz, E Benitez (O Romero 75), Bobadilla (Rojas 81), Barrios.

Mar 26 - Cairo
Egypt 2 (Morsi 86, Trezeguet 90+5)
Equatorial Guinea 0
HT: 0-0
Egypt: Ekramy - Emam, Hegazy (Gabr 57), Rabia, H El Sayed, Elmohamady (Morsi 57), Trezeguet, El Nenny (Gomaa 71), I Salah (Ghaly 63), M Salah (Zakaria 83), Moteab (Kamar 67).

Mar 26 - Paris
France 1 (Varane 21)
Brazil 3 (Oscar 40, Neymar 57, Luiz Gustavo 69)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 80,000. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)
France: Mandanda - Sagna, Varane, Sakho, Evra, Sissoko (Kondogbia 74), Schneiderlin, Matuidi (Giroud 84), Valbuena (Payet 82), Benzema, Griezmann (Fekir 74).
Brazil: Jefferson - Danilo, Thiago Silva, Miranda, Filipe Luis, Elias (Marcelo 90+2), Luiz Gustavo (Fernandinho 90), Willian (Douglas Costa 83), Oscar (Souza 86), Neymar, Roberto Firmino (Luiz Adriano 88).

Mar 26 - St Polten, Austria
Iran 2 (Nekounam 21, Amiri 50)
Chile 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Schuttengruber (Aut)
Iran: A Haghighi - Beikzadeh, Montazeri, Ghafouri, Hosseini, Teymourian, Amiri (Rezaeian 90), Dejagah, Nekounam, Shojaei (O Ebrahimi 70), Ghoochannejhad (Ansarifard 74).
Chile: Bravo - Fuenzalida (Isla 62), Roco (G Medel 63), Jara, Cornejo, Pulgar (Aranguiz 46), Millar (Pizarro 63), M Fernandez, Orellana (A Sanchez 46), Vargas, Mark Gonzalez (R Gutierrez 46).

Mar 26 - Abidjan
Ivory Coast 2 (Viera 25, Kalou pen 89)
Angola 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 12,400. **Ref:** Sanogo (BuF)
Ivory Coast: Mande - Deli, Bailly, Viera, Y Toure (Kouame 87), Tiene (Assale 57), Akpa-Akpro, Gradel (Kalou 65), Serey Die (Doukoure 90), Gervinho (Sio 74), Bony (Doumbia 46).
Angola: Landu - Gomito, Carlitos, Natael, Silva, Job (Rudy 73), Fredy (Amaro 59), Manucho Diniz, Gilberto (Yano 79), Paty, Pedro (Mingo Bille 85).

Mar 26 - Amman
Jordan 0
Syria 1 (Al Masri 18)
HT: 0-1

Mar 26 - Male
Maldives 0
Tajikistan 2 (Fatkhuloev 19, Dzhalilov 61)
HT: 0-1

Mar 26 - Seeb
Oman 6 (Abdul-Karim 15, 67, Al Muqbali pen 43, 51, Q Said 48, Al Khaldi pen 89)
Malaysia 0
HT: 2-0

Mar 26 - Doha
Qatar 1 (Assadalla 31)
Algeria 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Irmatov (Uzb)
Algeria: Doukha - Mandi, Medjani, Chafai, Ghoulam, Mahrez (Chenihi 61), Taider (Lacen 61), Bentaleb, Ghezzal (Belfodil 46), Brahimi, Slimani (Belaili 61).

Mar 26 - Nakhon Ratchasima
Thailand 2 (Suttinun 88, Pokkhao 90+2)
Singapore 0
HT: 0-0

Friday, March 27

Mar 27 - Fort Lauderdale, USA
Canada 1 (Haber 11)
Guatemala 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Rodriguez (Hnd)
Canada: Borjan - Tissot (Edwini-Bonsu 55), Piette, De Jong, Edgar, Bekker (Jackson 84), Ledgerwood (Ouimette 90), De Guzman (Mannella 90), Jakovic, Haber (Larin 81), Ricketts (Teibert 61).
Guatemala: Paredes (P Motta 19) - Lalin (Gallardo 46), Vasquez, D Lopez, Avila, Hernandez (Cincotta 61), Aparicio (Mejia 71), Marquez, Rodas (Pappa 57), Contreras, Padilla (C Ruiz 46).

Mar 27 - Changsha
China 2 (Yang Xu 58, Yu Dabao 82)
Haiti 2 (Louis 35, W Guerrier 73)
HT: 0-1

Mar 27 - Banjul
Gambia 1 (Mendy 31)
Mauritania 0
HT: 1-0

Mar 27 - Montego Bay
Jamaica 2 (Barnes 15, Mattocks 58)
Venezuela 1 (Cichero 12)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Ward (StK)
Jamaica: Kerr - Mariappa, Morgan, J Taylor (D Gordon 61), McCleary (Parkes 90+2), McAnuff, Watson, Austin (Gray 79), Lawrence, Barnes (Dino Williams 84), Mattocks (Grant 67).
Venezuela: D Hernandez - Rosales (A Gonzalez 82), Vizcarrondo, Amorebieta, Cichero, Rincon, Lucena (Guerra 46), Santos (Vargas 60), Arango, M Rondon (Martinez 46), S Rondon (Blanco 88).

Mar 27 - Oita
Japan 2 (Okazaki 78, Honda 83)
Tunisia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 34,777. **Ref:** Williams (Aus)
Japan: Gonda - H Sakai (Uchida 84), Yoshida, Makino, Fujiharu, Hasebe, Yamaguchi (Konno 84), Kiyotake (Kagawa 60), Nagai (Honda 60), Kawamata (Okazaki 72), Muto (Usami 72).
Tunisia: Ben Cherifia - S Ben Youssef, Abdennour, Maaloul, Ragued, Hannachi, Ben Hatira (Gouaida 69), Nater (H Mathlouthi 90+1), Moncer, Sassi (Larbi 65), Akaichi (Khalifa 65).

Mar 27 - Daejeon
South Korea 1 (Koo Ja-cheol 15)
Uzbekistan 1 (Kuziboyev 31)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 38,680. **Ref:** Sato (Jap)
South Korea: Kim Seung-gyu - Jeong Dong-ho (Kim Chang-soo 42), Kwak Tae-hwi, Kim Kee-hee, Yun Suk-young (Park Joo-ho 72), Han Kook-young, Kim Bo-kyung, Son Heung-min (Nam Tae-hee 61), Koo Ja-cheol, Lee Jae-sung (Han Kyo-won 86), Lee Jeong-hyeop (Ki Sung-yueng 31).
Uzbekistan: Suyunov - Mullajanov (Filiposyan 46), Shorakhmedov, Ismailov, Ahmedov (L Turaev 78), Sayfiev, Haydarov, Djeparov (Nurmatov 88), Rashidov (Mirzayev 75), Salomov (Tursunov 46), Kuziboyev (Shodiev 72).

Mar 27 - Couva
Trinidad & Tobago 0
Panama 1 (R Torres 16)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Moore (Guy)
Trinidad & Tobago: Phillip - Gomez (J Williams 76), Bateau, M Williams, Hoyte, Hackshaw (James 71), Hyland, Charles (Jack 53), Guerra (Joseph 81), Molino, Plaza (Garcia 63).
Panama: Penedo - Machado, Cummings, R Torres, L Henriquez, G Gomez, Godoy, Escobar (Quintero 78), Buitrago (Cooper 59), Aguilar (Nurse 59), Blackburn (Camargo 86).

Saturday, March 28

Mar 28 - Landover, USA
El Salvador 0
Argentina 2 (Banega 54, Mancuello 88)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 53,968. **Ref:** Escobar (Gtm)
El Salvador: Carrillo - A Flores (Mancia 90+2), Mendoza, Molina, Larin, Renderos (O Ceren 88), Alvarez (Herrera 85), D Ceren, Menjivar (Punyed 76), Jaime Alas (Santamaria 66), N Bonilla (R Burgos 59).
Argentina: Guzman - Zabaleta, Musacchio, Funes Mori, Orban, Pereyra, Banega, Di Maria (Mancuello 73), Tevez (Pastore 78), Lavezzi, Higuain.

Mar 28 - Le Havre, France
Ghana 1 (Boakye 84)
Senegal 2 (Konate 66, 76)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,466. **Ref:** Bastien (Fra)
Ghana: Brimah - Afful, Acheampong (Schlupp 65), Mensah (Amartey 35), Boye, Wakaso (Rabiu 81), Acquah (Agyemang-Badu 61), A Ayew, Atsu, Appiah (Boakye 80), J Ayew.
Senegal: Diallo - Toure (Gassama 75), L Sane, Mbodj, M'Bengue, M Sow (P Diop 46), Kouyate, Gueye, S Mane, D Ba (Konate 60), M B Diouf (Souare 87).

Mar 28 - Hong Kong
Hong Kong 1 (McKee 9)
Guam 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,607

Mar 28 - Sharjah, UAE
Iraq 2 (Ibrahim 5, Tariq 72)
DR Congo 1 (Mpoku pen 25)
HT: 1-1
DR Congo: Kudimbana (Mandanda 46) - Oualembo, Zakuani, Mavinga, Nsakala, Mulumbu, Ndongala (Botaka 75), Lukoki (Mbala 68), Kebano (Munganga 80), Mpoku (Mubele 80), Diba.

Mar 28 - Belle Vue
Mauritius 1 (Sophie 16)
Togo 1 (J Ayite 82)
HT: 1-0
Mauritius: Jean-Louis - Dorza, Bazerque, Bru, Ravina, Buckland, Veeranah, Calambe (Nazira 70), Sophie, Justin (Curpanen 81), Dig Dig (Fabien Pithia 60).
Togo: Yacoubou - Akakpo, Ouro-Akoriko, Sabah (Donou 76), Romao, Amewou (Segbefia 58), Atakora (Nouwoklo 78), Dossevi, Gakpe, Wome, J Ayite.

Mar 28 - Los Angeles, USA
Mexico 1 (J Hernandez 13)
Ecuador 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 90,000. **Ref:** Reid (Blz)
Mexico: Corona - Aguilar, Ayala, Reyes, Moreno, Layun, H Herrera (Damm 83), Vazquez (Guemez 72), Guardado, G Dos Santos (R Jimenez 75), J Hernandez (E Herrera 90+2).
Ecuador: Dominguez - Paredes (Rojas 82), Erazo, Mina, W Ayovi, Noboa, Lastra, A Valencia, Montero (Mena 42), Caicedo (Martinez 73), M Bolanos.

Mar 28 - Agadir
Morocco 0
Uruguay 1 (Cavani pen 51)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 55,000. **Ref:** Diedhiou (Sen)
Morocco: Munir - Dirar, Benatia, El Adoua, Lazaar, El Ahmadi (El Messaoudi 65), Kharja, Boussoufa (Labyad 65), El Kaddouri, Amrabat (Iajour 75), Hamdallah (Bammou 84).
Uruguay: Muslera - M Pereira, Godin, Gimenez, A Pereira, Sanchez (G Pereira 80), Arevalo, Lodeiro (A Gonzalez 70), Rolan (De Arrascaeta 70), Cavani, J Rodriguez (Stuani 60).

Sunday, March 29

Mar 29 - Lobatse
Botswana 1 (Nato 10)
Mozambique 2 (Luis 28, Dominguez 90+2)
HT: 1-1

Mar 29 - London
Brazil 1 (Roberto Firmino 72)
Chile 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 60,007. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Brazil: Jefferson - Danilo, Thiago Silva, Miranda, Marcelo (Filipe Luis 75), Souza (Elias 60), Fernandinho, Douglas Costa (Willian 62), Coutinho (Robinho 60), Neymar, Luiz Adriano (Roberto Firmino 60).
Chile: Bravo - Isla, Albornoz, Jara, Vidal (Vargas 79), Aranguiz, G Medel, Millar (M Fernandez 74), Mena (Mark Gonzalez 81), Hernandez, A Sanchez.

Mar 29 - Saint-Etienne
France 2 (Lacazette 14, Giroud 38)
Denmark 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 36,018. **Ref:** Kruzliak (Slk)
France: Ruffier - Jallet (Sagna 89), Varane, Koscielny, Tremoulinas, Schneiderlin (Zouma 82), Kondogbia (Guilavogui 60), Lacazette (Matuidi 71), Payet (Valbuena 82), Griezmann (Fekir 60), Giroud.
Denmark: Schmeichel - Jacobsen, Kjaer, Sviatchenko (K Hansen 77), Boilesen (S Poulsen 46), Wass (Christiansen 46), Kvist (Delaney 88), Krohn-Dehli, Vibe (N Jorgensen 58), Bendtner, Eriksen (Schone 83).

Mar 29 - Providence
Guyana 2 (Schultz 18, 32)
Grenada 0
HT: 2-0
Sent off: S Phillip (Grenada) 75

Mar 29 - Abidjan
Ivory Coast 1 (Gradel 71)
Equatorial Guinea 1 (Iban 13)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 28,653
Ivory Coast: Mande (Cisse 46) - Akpa-Akpro, Bailly, Viera (Doukoure 58), Deli, Tiene, Serey Die, Y Toure, Sio (Tallo 85), Gervinho (Bony 39), Kalou (Gradel 46).
Equatorial Guinea: Ovono - Evuy, Mbele (Engonga 46), Rui, Sipo, Zarandona (Ganet 90+3), Belima (Ellong 46), Randy, Kike (James 62), Iban (Josete 77), Balboa (Fabiani 90+5).

Mar 29 - Nelspruit
South Africa 1 (Zungu 90+2)
Nigeria 1 (Musa 85)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,526. **Ref:** Sikazwe (Zam)
South Africa: Khune - Hlatshwayo, Mathoho, Coetzee, Matlaba (Khumalo 80), Manyisa, Zungu, Jali, Serero, Rantie (Majoro 73), Vilakazi (Phala 87).
Nigeria: Akpeyi - Akas, Balogun, Ogbonnaya (Latifu 79), Omeruo (Oboabona 13), Akpan (Ukoh 46), Sokari (Ogu 46), Onazi, Simon (Babatunde 46), Musa, Samuel (Ighalo 65).

Mar 29 - Mwanza
Tanzania 1 (Samatta 76)
Malawi 1 (Kanyenda 4)
HT: 0-1

Mar 29 - Lusaka
Zambia 2 (Kalaba 60, Mukuka 80)
Rwanda 0
HT: 0-0

Monday, March 30

Mar 30 - Manama
Bahrain 2 (Aaish 29, Abdu 31)
Philippines 1 (Ott 60)
HT: 2-0

Mar 30 - Belek, Turkey
Belarus 0
Gabon 0
Belarus: Gorbunov (Chernik 46) - Makas (Maewski 62), Putsilo, Polyakov, Filipenko (Shitov 46), Volodko, Gordeychuk, Yanush (Kislyak 46), Nekhaychik (Stasevich 76), Politevich, Dragun (Kornilenko 62).
Gabon: Mfa Mezui - Appindangoye, Biyogo Poko, Ecuele Manga, Bulot, Kanga, D Ndong, Lengoualama (H Ndong 81), Obiang, Oto'o, Evouna.

Mar 30 - Sidoarjo
Indonesia 2 (Maitimo 61, Gonzales 74)
Myanmar 1 (Htan 87)
HT: 0-0

Mar 30 - Montego Bay
Jamaica 3 (Parkes 1, D Gordon 4, Mattocks 34)
Cuba 0
HT: 3-0
Jamaica: Thompson - D Gordon, Morgan (J Taylor 62), Barnes, Mattocks (Gray 61), Grant, Watson, Parkes (O Gordon 50), Austin (Dino Williams 78), Mariappa, Lawrence (Morris 60).
Cuba: D Guerra - Vaquero (Dranguet 69), Y Marquez (Clavelo 82), Collado (Y Martinez 68), Santa Cruz (Perez 81), M Reyes (Puja 77), A Martinez, Corrales, A Hernandez (Cruz 73), Diz Pe, Malblanche.

Mar 30 - Abu Dhabi, UAE
Kuwait 1 (M Al Enezi 45+1)
Colombia 3 (Aguilar 21, Cardona 68, Falcao pen 73)
HT: 1-1
Colombia: Ospina - Bocanegra, Sanchez, Franco, Andrade (Renteria 68), Guarin, Aguilar (Mejia 64), Juan Cuadrado (Cardona 46), J Quintero (Mojica 46), Bacca (Gutierrez 46), Falcao.

Mar 30 - Skopje
Macedonia 0
Australia 0
Att: 1,000. **Ref:** Jakupovic (Bos)
Macedonia: Bogatinov (Naumovski 46) - Georgievski (Ristovski 73), Ristevski, Sikov, D Velkoski, Trajcevski (Bardi 85), Polozani, Blazevski, Trajkovski (Abdurahimi 70), A Ibraimi, Radeski (Todorovski 44).
Australia: Federici (Langerak 62) - Elrich, Wilkinson, Sainsbury (Wright 46), Behich, Mooy (Juric 62), Jedinak (Bozanic 72), Luongo, Burns (Ikonomidis 82), Leckie, Troisi (Oar 46).

Mar 30 - Doha, Qatar
Oman 1 (Al Busaidi 75)
Algeria 4 (Belfodil 2, 62, Feghouli 24, 61)
HT: 0-2
Algeria: Doukha - Zeffane, Mandi (Medjani 82), Halliche, Ghoulam, Bentaleb, Taider, Feghouli (Ghezzal 83), Chenihi (Mahrez 66), Brahimi (Slimani 58), Belfodil (Belaili 82).

Mar 30 - Bayamon
Puerto Rico 0
Canada 3 (Ricketts 42, Edwini-Bonsu 60, Larin 77)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Vasquez (DoR)
Puerto Rico: Sanchez - Lalondriz, Fernandez, A Rivera, Cabrero (J Perez 65), Ramos, Marrero, Coca, A Perez, Morales, Oikkonen (Bozkurt 36).
Canada: Borjan (Roberts 87) - Piette, Tissot, Jakovic, Edgar, De Jong (Ouimette 34), De Guzman, Ledgerwood (Edwini-Bonsu 46), Bekker (Teibert 62), Haber (Larin 65), Ricketts (Jackson 57).

Mar 30 - Doha
Qatar 1 (Hassan 46)
Slovenia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 200. **Ref:** Kim Sang-woo (SKo)
Slovenia: Oblak - Stojanovic, Andjelkovic, Maroh (Krajnc 65), Struna (Brecko 77), Rotman (Bezjak 55), Mertelj, Verbic (Kirm 77), Lazarevic (Omladic 59), Kampl, Matavz (Beric 46).

Mar 30 - Dammam
Saudi Arabia 2 (Al Sahlawi 86, pen 90+3)
Jordan 1 (Al Dardour 90)
HT: 0-0

Mar 30 - Bangkok
Thailand 2 (Prakit 15, Chedjou og 31)
Cameroon 3 (Moukandjo 42, N'Jie pen 77, Ndassi 88)
HT: 2-1

Tuesday, March 31

Mar 31 - East Rutherford, USA
Argentina 2 (Aguero 8, Pastore 58)
Ecuador 1 (M Bolanos 24)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 48,000. **Ref:** Santos (PR)
Argentina: Romero - Roncaglia, Garay, Otamendi, Rojo, Biglia, Mascherano, Di Maria (Lavezzi 78), Pastore (Banega 78), Mancuello (Pereyra 46), Aguero (Tevez 75).
Ecuador: Dominguez - Paredes, Achilier, Erazo, W Ayovi, Noboa, Lastra (Gruezo 64), Ibarra (Martinez 84), Mena, M Bolanos, Caicedo.

Mar 31 - Vienna
Austria 1 (Janko 34)
Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 (I Hajrovic 48)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 48,500. **Ref:** Kovarik (CzR)
Austria: Ozcan - Dragovic, Suttner, Wimmer, Klein, Junuzovic (Hinterseer 79), Baumgartlinger (Prodl 62), Sabitzer (Weimann 89), Alaba (Ilsanker 46), Arnautovic (Harnik 62), Janko (Djuricin 46).
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Begovic - Mujdza, Bicakcic, Spahic (Sunjic 46), Zukanovic, Hadzic (Prcic 79), Medunjanin (Stilic 55), Pjanic (Besic 46), Vrsajevic (Ibisevic 69), I Hajrovic (Susic 82), Dzeko.

Mar 31 - Nanjing
China 1 (Yu Dabao 90+4)
Tunisia 1 (Moncer 39)
HT: 0-1
China: Wang Dalei - Ren Hang, Jiang Zhipeng, Feng Xiaoting (Mei Fang 46), Cai Huikang, Yang Xu (Gao Lin 46), Liu Jianye (Piao Cheng 66), Ji Xiang, Wu Xi (Yu Hai 49), Wu Lei (Yu Dabao 77), Yu Hanchao (Zhang Chiming 66).
Tunisia: Ben Mustapha - Hannachi (H Mathlouthi 46), Abdennour (Yacoubi 60), C Dhaouadi (S Ben Youssef 56), Haddadi (Larbi 75), Ragued, Sassi, Gouaida, Ben Hatira (Moncer 32), Khalifa, Khenissi (Maaloul 90+1).

Mar 31 - Carson, USA
El Salvador 0
Guatemala 0
Att: 20,000
El Salvador: Contreras - Mendoza, Molina, Renderos, Torres, Punyed (Larin 57), D Ceren, Menjivar (Mancia 70), Alvarez (N Bonilla 63), Jaime Alas (Santamaria 80), Herrera (R Burgos 52).
Guatemala: P Motta - Lalin, Vasquez, D Lopez (Castrillo 80), Avila (Mejia 66), Aparicio, Marquez, Cincotta (Hernandez 57), Pappa (Rodas 80), C Ruiz (Padilla 88), Contreras.

Mar 31 - Tallinn
Estonia 1 (Vassiljev 55)
Iceland 1 (R Gislason 9)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,334. **Ref:** Treimanis (Lat)
Estonia: Aksalu - Teniste (Kams 87), Jaager, Klavan, Kallaste, Alliku (Raudsepp 76), Dmitrijev (Antonov 90+1), Mets, Kruglov (Purje 76), Vassiljev, Piiroja (Zenjov 13).
Iceland: Kristinsson - Jonasson, Magnusson (R Sigurdsson 46), Fjoluson (O Skulason 46), Finnbogason, Bodvarsson (J Gudmundsson 46), Palsson (A Skulason 46), Hauksson, R Gislason (B Saevarsson 85), Hallfredsson (Sigurjonsson 59), Kjartansson.

Mar 31 - Paris, France
Ghana 1 (Agyemang-Badu 53)
Mali 1 (Sako pen 71)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,000
Ghana: Dauda - Afful, Amartey, Boye (Gyimah 56), Schlupp, Rabiu, Agyemang-Badu, Acheampong (Accam 81), A Ayew (Wakaso 66), Atsu (Appiah 67), Boakye (J Ayew 81).
Mali: S Diakite (Yirango 68) - D Diakite (I Coulibaly 46), Wague, Konate, Tamboura, Y Sylla, B Toure, Adama Traore (S Sow 46), S Yatabare (Dembele 60), M Maiga, Sako (Abdou Traore 85).

Mar 31 - Amsterdam
Holland 2 (De Vrij 13, Klaassen 16)
Spain 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 51,500. **Ref:** Collum (Sco)
Holland: Vermeer - Janmaat, De Vrij, Martins Indi, Willems, Klaassen, Blind (De Guzman 73), Sneijder (Wijnaldum 62), Narsingh, Huntelaar (Dost 79), Depay (Afellay 85).
Spain: De Gea - Carvajal, Pique (San Jose 69), Albiol, Bernat, Mario Suarez (Sergio Ramos 69), Fabregas, Cazorla (Iniesta 76), Pedro (Vitolo 46), Juanmi (Morata 62), Isco (Silva 46).

Mar 31 - Sharjah, UAE
Iraq 1 (Kasim 59)
DR Congo 0
HT: 0-0
DR Congo: Kiassumba - Tamata, Makwekwe, Kimwaki (Mavinga 70), Mabele, Maghoma, Munganga (Mpoku 56), Toko (Mulumbu 65), Bolasie, Mubele (Diba 75), Botaka (Mbala 65).

Mar 31 - Turin
Italy 1 (Pelle 29)
England 1 (Townsend 79)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 31,138. **Ref:** Brych (Ger)
Italy: Buffon - Ranocchia, Bonucci, Chiellini (Moretti 72), Florenzi (Abate 60), Parolo, Valdifiori (Verratti 67), Soriano, Darmian (Antonelli 73), Eder (Vazquez 60), Pelle (Immobile 60).
England: Hart - Clyne (Walker 46), Smalling (Carrick 44), Jagielka, Gibbs (Bertrand 88), Jones, Delph (Townsend 70), Henderson (Mason 74), Rooney, Kane, Walcott (Barkley 55).

Mar 31 - Tokyo
Japan 5 (Aoyama 6, Okazaki 54, Shibasaki 80, Usami 83, Kawamata 90)
Uzbekistan 1 (Tukhtakhodjaev 82)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 46,007. **Ref:** Delovski (Aus)
Japan: Kawashima - Morishige, Uchida (Ota 46), G Sakai, Shoji, Konno (Mizumoto 46), Aoyama, Kagawa (Shibasaki 69), Okazaki (Kawamata 83), Honda (Osako 72), Inui (Usami 63).
Uzbekistan: A Turaev - Ismailov, Merzlyakov (Mirzayev 59), Mukhammadiev (Shorakhmedov 74), Tukhtakhodjaev, Haydarov, L Turaev (Mullajanov 85), Rashidov, Tursunov (Sayfiev 59), Shodiev (Kuziboyev 46), Nasimov (Nurmatov 77).

Mar 31 - Eschen-Mauren
Liechtenstein 1 (Kaufmann 29)
San Marino 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 450. **Ref:** Hanni (Swi)
Liechtenstein: Jehle (B Buchel 46) - Burgmeier (Wolfinger 62), Frick (Heeb 73), Kaufmann, Oehri, Wieser, M Buchel (Gubser 86), N Hasler, Polverino, Kuhne (Brandle 88), Salanovic (A Christen 78).
San Marino: A Simoncini - Battistini, Palazzi (Cesarini 70), F Vitaioli (Hirsch 83), D Simoncini, Alessandro Della Valle, A Golinucci (E Golinucci 75), L Gasperoni, Tosi (M Vitaioli 46), Selva (Stefanelli 58), Rinaldi (Tomassini 70).

Mar 31 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 1 (Mutsch 30)
Turkey 2 (Erdinc 4, Calhanoglu 87)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 3,718. **Ref:** Sant (Mlt)
Luxembourg: Joubert - Chanot, Schnell, Philipps (Deville 70), Gerson, Da Mota (Laterza 76), Payal, Joachim, Malget, Mutsch, Jans.
Turkey: Mert - Mahmut, Ozan, Sener, Ekici (Selcuk Inan 70), Caner, Arda (Umit 88), Calhanoglu, Kazim-Richards (Volkan Sen 46; Eren 75), Sahan (Enes 58), Erdinc (Umut 46).

Mar 31 - Nouakchott
Mauritania 2 (Adama Ba pen 70, Niass 75)
Niger 0
HT: 0-0

Mar 31 - Kansas City, USA
Mexico 1 (E Herrera 3)
Paraguay 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Lopez (Gtm)
Mexico: M Hernandez - Dominguez (Ayala 79), Reyes, Alanis, Duenas, Guemez, Torres Nilo (Aldrete 59), J Dos Santos (Aguilar 77), J C Medina (Vazquez 85), E Herrera (J Hernandez 59), R Jimenez (G Dos Santos 78).
Paraguay: Villar (A Silva 30) - Balbuena, Da Silva, Aguilar (M Caceres 65), Moreira (Rojas 80), Oviedo, R Ortiz, Piris (Samudio 46), O Romero (Martinez 46), Bobadilla (Perez 62), Barrios.

Mar 31 - Panama City
Panama 2 (B Perez 17, Tejada 25)
Costa Rica 1 (Saborio 67)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Santander (Mex)
Panama: Penedo - Cummings, R Torres, G Gomez, B Perez, Cooper, Machado, L Henriquez, Tejada (Nurse 73), Quintero, Godoy.
Costa Rica: Alvarado - Hernandez (Calvo 44), Brown, Borges, Myrie, B Ruiz, Campbell (Vega 69), Diaz, Guzman (Aguilar 79), Urena, Venegas (Saborio 61).

Mar 31 - Fort Lauderdale, USA
Peru 0
Venezuela 1 (Martinez 61)
HT: 0-0
Peru: Gallese - Advincula, Zambrano, Ramos, Cespedes, Ballon, Tapia, Deza (Cueva 31), Carrillo (Benavente 71), Hurtado (C Gonzales 84), Avila (Ruidiaz 71).
Venezuela: Baroja - Rosales, Vizcarrondo, Tunez, Amorebieta, Rincon, Seijas (Lucena 69), C Gonzalez (Vargas 79), Guerra (A Gonzalez 90+3), Martinez (Arango 64), S Rondon (M Rondon 90+3).

Mar 31 - Estoril
Portugal 0
Cape Verde 2 (Odair Fortes 37, Gege 43)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 3,500. **Ref:** Hategan (Rom)
Portugal: Anthony Lopes - Cedric (Andre Andre 65), Paulo Oliveira, Andre Pinto, Antunes, Andre Gomes (Andre Almeida 79), Adrien Silva (Pizzi 65), Joao Mario (Ukra 46), Bernardo Silva (Danilo Pereira 62), Hugo Almeida (Eder 65), Vieirinha.
Sent off: Andre Pinto 60.
Cape Verde: Vozinha - J Fortes, Fernando Varela (Calu 71), Gege (S Fortes 46), Nivaldo, Semedo, Platini (Babanco 62), Nuno Rocha, Odair Fortes, Julio Tavares (Ricardo Gomes 80), Heldon (Ryan Mendes 80).

Mar 31 - Khimki
Russia 0
Kazakhstan 0
Att: 4,200. **Ref:** Kulbakov (Bls)
Russia: Lodygin - Kozlov, Novoseltsev, V Berezutsky (Zobnin 22), Kambolov, Schennikov (Nabiullin 71), Torbinskiy (Davydov 63), Ryazantsev (Ozdoev 46), Samedov, Kanunnikov (Efremov 80), Dzyuba (Portnyagin 46).
Kazakhstan: Pokatilov - Engel, Gurman, Logvinenko, Malyi, Shomko, Konysbayev (Kozhamberdy 78), Smakov, Zhukov (Beisebekov 86), Islamkhan, Dzolchiev (Zhangylyshbay 43; Schetkin 82).

Mar 31 - Singapore
Singapore 2 (Faris 54, Baihakki 80)
Guam 2 (Nicklaw 38, Cunliffe 72)
HT: 0-1

Mar 31
Slovakia 1 (Duda 49)
Czech Republic 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,594. **Ref:** Vad (Hun)
Slovakia: Mucha - Pekarik, Skrtel (Durica 46), Salata (Michalik 46), Hubocan, Mak (Sestak 60), Hrosovsky, Gregus, Weiss (Duris 60), Hamsik (Jakubko 46), Duda (Pecovsky 81).
Czech Republic: Vaclik - Gebre Selassie (M Kadlec 60), Suchy, Holek, Hlousek (Novak 81), Vacha, Pospisil (Plasil 60), V Kadlec (Dockal 72), Kolar (Darida 72), Pilar (Krejci 60), Necid.

Mar 31 - Seoul
South Korea 1 (Lee Jae-sung 86)
New Zealand 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 33,514. **Ref:** Bin Yaacob (Mly)
South Korea: Kim Jin-hyeon - Kim Young-gwon, Cha Du-ri (Kim Chang-soo 43), Kim Ju-young (Kwak Tae-hwi 46), Ki Sung-yueng, Park Joo-ho, Son Heung-min (Lee Jae-sung 64), Han Kook-young (Kim Bo-kyung 83), Nam Tae-hee, Han Kyo-won (Koo Ja-cheol 46), Ji Dong-won (Lee Jeong-hyeop 72).
New Zealand: Marinovic - Roux, Boxall, Tzimopoulos, Wynne, Tuiloma (Van den Broek 78), McGlinchey, De Vries (Boyd 46), Rojas (Dyer 78), Lewis (Stevens 53; Fenton 61), Wood.

Mar 31 - Stockholm
Sweden 3 (Ibrahimovic 11, Berg 21, Toivonen 89)
Iran 1 (Nekounam pen 24)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 33,773. **Ref:** Gozubuyuk (Hol)
Sweden: R Olsen - Granqvist, P Bengtsson, E Johansson, Tinnerholm, Kallstrom (Wernbloom 74), Zengin (Quaison 66), Ekdal (Rohden 90+2), Ibrahimovic (Toivonen 46), Berg (Elmander 65), Forsberg (S Larsson 43).
Iran: A Haghighi - Montazeri, Beikzadeh, Hosseini, Amiri (Rezaeian 79), Teymourian, Dejagah (Ghafouri 65), Pouraliganji (Sadeghi 46), Nekounam (O Ebrahimi 75), Shojaei (Ansarifard 88), Ghoochannejhad (Hassanzadeh 90).

Mar 31 - Zurich
Switzerland 1 (Stocker 80)
United States 1 (Shea 45)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 16,100. **Ref:** Banti (Ita)
Switzerland: Burki - Lichtsteiner (Widmer 46), Schar, Von Bergen, Moubandje, Inler (Xhaka 59), Fernandes (Seferovic 72), Frei (Kasami 46), Shaqiri, Drmic (Embolo 56), Mehmedi (Stocker 46).
United States: Rimando (Yarbrough 46) - Chandler, Orozco (Alvarado 46), Brooks, Shea, Williams, Bedoya (Yedlin 76), Morales (Ream 89), Bradley, Zardes (Morris 89), Altidore. *Sent off: Altidore 68.*

Mar 31 - Dushanbe
Tajikistan 2 (Davronov 42, Khamrakulov 89)
Syria 3 (Rafe 23, pen 37, Al Hussain 61)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Meshkov (Rus)

Mar 31 - Lviv
Ukraine 1 (Yarmolenko 35)
Latvia 1 (Maksimenko 90+1)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 17,500. **Ref:** Lechner (Aut)
Ukraine: Boiko - Tymoshchuk, Kucher, Yarmolenko, Husiev (Konoplyanka 59), Shevchuk, Fedetskyi, Bezus (Malinovskyi 85), Harmash (Rybalka 46), Rakytskyi, Kravets (Budkivskyi 75).
Latvia: Kolinko - Gabovs, Jagodinskis, Gorkss, Kurakins (Maksimenko 46), Tarasovs (Dubra 46), Laizans, Fertovs (Zjuzins 46), Zigajevs (A Visnakovs 46), Rakels, Sabala (E Visnakovs 68).

Wednesday, April 15
Apr 15 - San Antonio
United States 2 (Morris 49, Agudelo 72)
Mexico 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 64,369. **Ref:** Montero (CR)
United States: Rimando (Yarbrough 46) - Yedlin, Gonzalez, Alvarado, Garza (Shea 46), Beckerman (Kitchen 63), Diskerud (Evans 80), Corona (Ibarra 46), Bradley, Zardes, Morris (Agudelo 65).
Mexico: Saucedo - Mier (Alanis 46), F Rodriguez (L Rodriguez 60), Salcedo (Dominguez 46), Velarde, Osuna, Esquivel, Flores (Corral 67), Montes (Rios 79), E Torres, E Herrera (Bueno 83).

Club football

AFRICA

CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st round
1st legs - Mar 14-21; 2nd legs - Apr 3-5
Al Hilal (Sud) v Big Bullets (Mwi)
4-0, 1-1 (agg 5-1)
Al Merreikh (Sud) v Kabuscorp (Ang)
2-0, 1-2 (agg 3-2)
APR (Rwa) v Al Ahly (Egy)
0-2, 0-2 (agg 0-4)
Cosmos Bafia (Cam) v Esperance (Tun)
0-1, 1-3 (agg 1-4)
Coton Sport (Cam) v Sanga Balende (DRC)
0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2)
Enyimba (Nga) v Smouha (Egy)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
Gor Mahia (Ken) v AC Leopards (Con)
0-1, 0-1 (agg 0-2)
Kaizer Chiefs (SAf) v Raja Casablanca (Mor)
0-1, 0-2 (agg 0-3)
Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf) v TP Mazembe (DRC)
1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3)
Mangasport (Gab) v Stade Malien (Mli)
1-3, 1-2 (agg 2-5)
MC El Eulma (Alg) v Asante Kotoko (Gha)
0-0, 2-1 (agg 2-1)
Moghreb Tetouan (Mor) v Kano Pillars (Nga)
4-0, 1-2 (agg 5-2)
Real Banjul (Gam) v ES Setif (Alg)
1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3)
Semassi (Tog) v CS Sfaxien (Tun)
0-5, 0-1 (agg 0-6)
USM Alger (Alg) v AS Pikine (Sen)
5-1, 1-1 (agg 6-2)
Zesco United (Zam) v AS Kaloum (Gui)
1-1, 1-1 (agg 2-2, AS Kaloum 5-4 on pens)

CONFEDERATION CUP

1st round
1st legs - Mar 13-15; 2nd legs - Apr 3-5
Al Ahly Shendi (Sud) v MK Etancheite (DRC)
2-1, 1-5 (agg 3-6)
AS Vita (DRC) v Ferroviario da Beira (Moz)
3-0, 0-1 (agg 3-1)
ASEC Abidjan (IvC) v Al Ittihad (Lby)
1-1, 2-1 (agg 3-2)
CF Mounana (Gab) v Power Dynamos (Zam)
4-0, 0-3 (agg 4-3)
Djoliba (Mli) v Petrojet (Egy)
2-1, 0-0 (agg 2-1)
Etoile Sahel (Tun) v Benfica de Luanda (Ang)
1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1)
FUS Rabat (Mor) v Togo Port (Tog)
3-0, 1-2 (agg 4-2)
Hearts of Oak (Gha) v Olympique de Ngor (Sen)
2-1, 3-2 (agg 5-3)
Horoya (Gui) v ASO Chlef (Alg)
1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, ASO Chlef 5-3 on pens)
Onze Createurs (Mli) v Sahel (Nig)
2-1, 0-0 (agg 2-1)
Orlando Pirates (SAf) v Uganda Revenue Auth (Uga)
2-1, 2-2 (agg 4-3)
Royal Leopards (Swa) v Petro de Luanda (Ang)
2-2, 1-0 (agg 3-2)
Warri Wolves (Nga) v Dedebit (Eth)
2-0, 0-0 (agg 2-0)
Young Africans (Tan) v Platinum (Zim)
5-1, 0-1 (agg 5-2)
Zamalek (Egy) v Rayon Sports (Rwa)
3-1, 3-0 (agg 6-1)

Club Africain (Tun) v Dolphins (Nga) – Dolphins failed to arrive in time for 1st leg; Club Africain were given walkover

CONCACAF

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Semi-finals
1st legs - Mar 17/18; 2nd legs - Apr 7/8
Herediano (CR) v America (Mex)
3-0, 0-6 (agg 3-6)
Montreal Impact (Can) v Alajuelense (CR)
2-0, 2-4 (agg 4-4, Montreal on away goals)

ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

2014-15 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Parham (C)	18	15	2	1	45	7	47
Hoppers	18	11	4	3	31	20	37
SAP	18	11	2	5	32	18	35
Grenades	18	9	1	8	35	35	28
Fort Road	18	8	2	8	30	25	26
Ottos Rangers	18	6	3	9	23	24	21
Old Road	18	6	3	9	28	33	21
Five Islands[1]	18	5	4	9	20	28	19
Bassa (R)	18	3	6	9	12	24	15
Urlings (R)	18	2	1	15	12	54	7

[1]Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-offs

Previous champions (5 most recent)
2009-10 Bassa
2010-11 Parham
2011-12 Old Road
2012-13 Old Road
2013-14 SAP

BERMUDA

2014-15 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Somerset (C)	18	10	4	4	27	18	34
Dandy Town	18	9	4	5	43	35	31
PHC	18	9	3	6	34	24	30
Robin Hood	18	6	7	5	31	27	25
Hamilton	18	7	3	8	23	24	24
Devonshire	18	7	3	8	20	24	24
North Village	18	6	5	7	31	28	23
Southampton	18	5	5	8	19	27	20
Flanagan's (R)	18	5	4	9	32	45	19
St George's (R)	18	4	6	8	19	27	18

Previous champions (5 most recent)
2009-10 Dandy Town
2010-11 North Village
2011-12 Dandy Town
2012-13 Devonshire
2013-14 Dandy Town

OCEANIA

TAHITI

Top 6 after 9-round regular season formed championship group

2014-15 – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts[1]
Tefana[2] (C)	10	8	1	1	43	14	39
Pirae[3]	10	8	1	1	45	12	39
Central[3]	10	5	0	5	23	28	29
Dragon[3]	10	2	1	7	24	38	21
Manu Ura	10	3	1	6	14	25	20
Roniu[4]	10	1	2	7	14	46	17

[1]4pts for a win, 2pts for a draw, 1pt for a defeat
[2]Received 2 bonus points for topping regular-season table & another 2 bonus points for fulfilling certain league criteria
[3]Received 4 bonus points for fulfilling certain league criteria
[4]Received 2 bonus points for fulfilling certain league criteria

Previous champions (5 most recent)
2009-10 Tefana
2010-11 Tefana
2011-12 Dragon
2012-13 Dragon
2013-14 Pirae

KEY TO TABLES
(C) = champions
(R) = relegated

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World Soccer's GREAT MATCHES

APRIL 7, 2004, LA CORUNA, SPAIN: CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUARTER-FINAL 2ND LEG

Deportivo 4 Milan 0

Spanish side stun European champions and produce a remarkable second-leg comeback to win 4-3 on aggregate

Getting there...Valeron celebrates his goal

Three years after Deportivo fought back from 3-0 down to beat Paris Saint-Germain 4-3 in a Champions League group game, the Spanish side were at it again.

Trailing Milan 4-1 from the quarter-final first leg at San Siro, Javier Irureta's team were not given a prayer in the return in Spain. But three unanswered goals before the break, followed by another midway through the second half, caused one of the biggest shocks in the history of European football's top club competition.

While the victory over PSG in 2001 was impressive, the French side had no superstars like those of Milan and were bottom of their group at the time. The Italians, on the other hand, were the reigning European champions and could boast such talents as Paolo Maldini, Alessandro Nesta, Andrea Pirlo, Clarence Seedorf and Kaka in their ranks.

An early strike from Walter Pandiani gave Depor momentum and that increased with two further goals before half-time to leave the Spaniards level on aggregate at 4-4 and ahead by virtue of the away goal scored two weeks earlier.

The second half was not quite as eventful as the opening 45 minutes but, after Jon Dahl Tomasson had missed a great chance to reduce the arrears and put Milan ahead in the tie, Deportivo's club captain Fran added a fourth goal to secure a place in the semi-finals.

Chance...Tomasson

No team had overturned a 3-0 first-leg deficit in the Champions League before, and what made this result even more impressive was that Carlo Ancelotti's Milan team had not conceded a goal away from home in Europe all season.

It was a sensational achievement by the Spanish side, but the adventure was to end in the next round when, after drawing 0-0 in Portugal, they lost 1-0 at home to the eventual winners, Porto. WS

Referee: Meier (Swi)

KEY MOMENTS

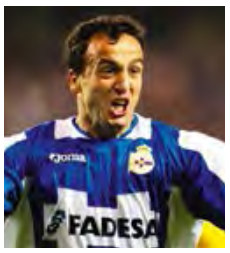
Second...Valeron heads home

4min
Jon Dahl Tomasson has a chance to put the tie out of reach, but Deportivo goalkeeper Jose Molina parries away the Dane's weak volley.

5min
A left-foot shot from Walter Pandiani, following a mistake by Paolo Maldini, gives the hosts an early lead. **1-0**

8 min
A deflected shot from Depor's Sanchez Victor comes back off a post and out for a corner.

26min
Milan's Dida saves low down at his post after a Juan Valeron shot, following a fine exchange of passes with Victor.


Clear...substitute Fran scored the fourth goal

35min
Albert Luque crosses and a mistake by Dida allows Valeron to head into an empty net. **2-0**

43min
Alessandro Nesta hesitates, allowing Luque to rob him of the ball and beat Dida to put the hosts ahead on away goals. **3-0**

51min
Tomasson breaks clear but shoots wide when in a good position.

56min
Victor misses a great chance for Deportivo as he shoots over from just eight yards out.

75min
A deflected shot by substitute Fran, following a mistake by Gennaro Gattuso, puts the Spaniards in the clear. **4-0**

82min
Milan substitute Rui Costa nearly takes the match into extra time, but his 25-yard curling shot is superbly saved by Molina.

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